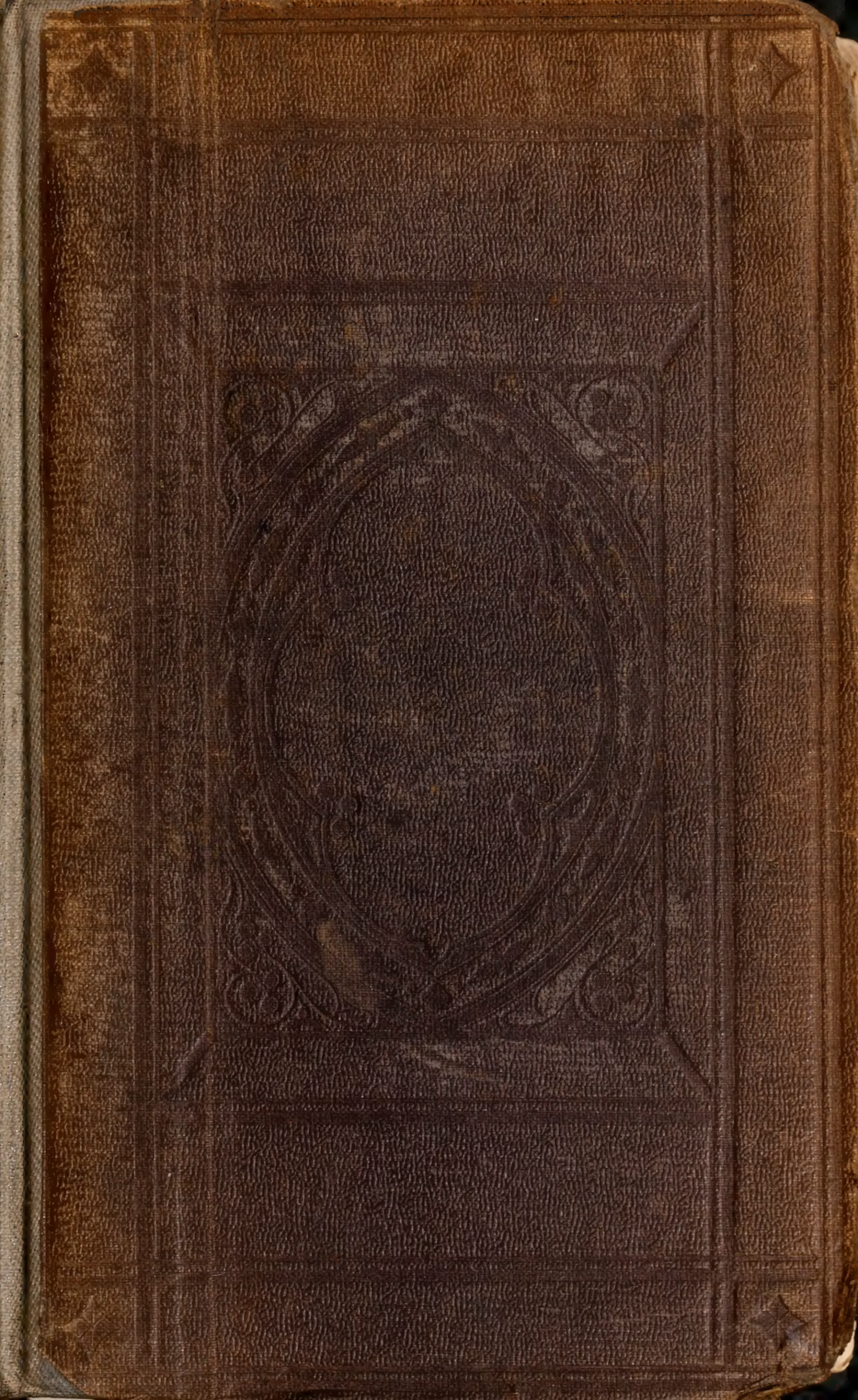

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CHURCH HISTORY

IN

ENGLAND,

FROM

THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE PERIOD OF THE
REFORMATION.

BY THE

REV. ARTHUR MARTINEAU, M.A.,

VICAR OF WHITKIRK, YORKSHIRE,
AND RURAL DEAN.

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PREFACE.

As a work such as the following may appear to some to require apology, the Author thinks it right to state briefly the circumstances which have led to its publication. He was informed by those whose position gave them the best means of judging of the fact, that a want was generally felt of an Ecclesiastical History of England that might be accessible to all classes of readers and students. A further acquaintance with the subject convinced him of the truth of this observation; and though the present attempt derives its origin rather from the encouragement given to the undertaking by others, than from any hope entertained by himself that he could supply the want, the fact of its existence may be sufficient to justify his intrusion upon the public attention.

There is scarcely a single branch of knowledge an accurate acquaintance with which is of more importance to a well-educated Englishman (whatever his religious opinions may be), than that of which the following pages treat. And yet, unhappily, it is a subject which has been too often misrepresented for the purposes of controversial polemics and religious party warfare. The consequence of this is that a complete ecclesiastical history of England, of the same extent as the work of Collier, but written in a more liberal and impartial spirit than that which animated the nonjuring divine, is still a desideratum in our literature. The tendency to convert every important fact in the earlier Church history of England into a matter of fierce contention between rival churches might, it would seem, be diminished if men would only be content to believe that, in order to justify the English Reformation, it is not necessary either to ignore all the good of Roman Catholic times, or to attempt (with some Protestant writers) the hopeless task of proving that the Reformation was little more than a return to ancient Anglican principles. There seems to be no reason why we should not (for example) appreciate duly the noble characters of King Alfred and Archbishop Anselm, without extenuating the Romish tendencies of the former or approving of the ecclesiastical principles of the latter. Neither, again, is there any reason why a becoming thankfulness for the blessings of a Church establishment, founded by the piety of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, should make us blind to the gross errors of their theological system. Because transubstantiation was not formally taught by their divines, we are not on that account to suppose that they really had much in common with the Reformers of the 16th century. In order to set this matter in a clearer light, it has been thought right to enter, rather more fully, perhaps, than has been usual in works of this description, into the consideration of the Anglo-Saxon penitentials. The Author has had also another object in view in explaining the old penitential discipline, that he might, by exposing its real nature, give a warning as to the pernicious character of the system of auricular confession, which, unhappily, there is a disposition in some quarters to revive in the Church of England. In the discussion of this, as of many other points,—for instance the question of the credibility of ecclesiastical miracles, the exercise of the royal supremacy in the appointment of bishops, and the synodical constitution of the Church,—he has found himself treading upon ground which is the battle field of some of the fiercest controversies of the present day. If, in handling any of these difficult and delicate subjects he has unconsciously shown any degree of party feeling, he must ask the indulgence of the reader. In the state of society in which Englishmen of the present generation are destined to move, amidst those in whom the spirit of Anselm and Becket still lives and defies the authority of the state as confidently, if not with the same powers of mischief, as in the 12th century, such subjects are matters of daily discussion. Hence it happens that the writer, who would inform the public mind upon questions of such intense interest to all, can hardly avoid the appearance of being a partisan either of one side or the other. The Author trusts, however, that there is no principle advocated in this book which is not compatible with the maintenance of all that Christ hath enjoined upon His Church, as well as with the duties of a loyal subject of the state. He is confident that it was never intended that "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," should deliver us from subjection to man's ordinances in matters of religion, and that a due submission to such ordinances is our chief, if not our only, preservation from such a state of ecclesiastical bondage as that which our fathers shook off at the Reformation. The Author's task will not have been undertaken in vain if this little work may be permitted, by God's blessing, in any way to strengthen in men's minds the conviction, that a Scriptural form of religion, imposing no fetters upon the individual conscience, the ministers of which are supported by the state, and in due subjection to its supremacy, without being tyrannised over by it, is indeed the greatest good that Providence can bestow upon a nation.

It remains that he should mention that, amidst the duties and retirement of a large country parish, he has not been able to derive his information exclusively from ancient and cotemporary sources. The translations of the Rev. Dr. Giles have, however, made many of the early English histories easily accessible to all; and he has gladly availed himself of this method of becoming acquainted with their contents. He has also made copious use of the same learned writer's edition of the cotemporary Lives and Letters of Becket. Mr. Thorpe's valuable translations of Anglo-Saxon Records, and of Dr. Lappenberg's History, and Mr. Kemble's Saxons in England, have also supplied him largely with materials for the Anglo-Saxon portion of the work. He has also availed himself of the learned researches of the Rev. Henry Soames in his Bampton Lectures, though he has felt himself compelled to differ widely from that author's conclusions upon several important points. The same observation will apply to the eloquent and interesting histories of Dr. Lingard, whose blind devotion to the cause of his own Church too often renders him a very unfaithful guide amidst the difficulties of early English and mediæval ecclesiastical history.

It has been thought desirable, at a time when the Pope has attempted so recently to re-establish his ancient dominion in England, to trace historically the growth of the Papal supremacy in the period before Augustine's mission; and for this part of the work the Author is almost entirely indebted to the valuable lectures on the subject lately published by the Rev. Professor Hussey, of Oxford.

It seems unnecessary to specify more particularly the authorities that have been followed. References in general are given in the notes to show whence the principal points stated in the text are derived; but it has not been thought expedient to do this in every case, as a multiplicity of references is apt to weary the reader.

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Ritual and ceremonies of Anglo-Saxon Church whence derived. Term Liturgy, in what sense used by ecclesiastical writers. Roman liturgy. Introduced by Augustine into England. Quære, how far he used the permission to vary it. Observance of Rogation Days, &c. Scottish liturgy. Decree of Council of Cloveshoo with respect to Roman ritual. No strict uniformity of usage. Version of the Septuagint, and translation of Jerome. Course of Benedict. Origin of uses of Sarum, &c. Canons with respect to the administration of the Holy Communion. Always administered in both kinds. Daily prayers at the seven canonical hours. By whom attended. Of what they consisted. Chanting. Baptism, how and where administered in earlier times. At what periods afterwards, and where. Baptisteries and fonts. Requisites for baptism of adults. That of infants enforced by law. By whom it might be performed in case of necessity.

Examination of sponsors. Confirmation and infant communion. Rite of confirmation. How soon administered. Bishops went about confirming. Ceremonies of marriage. Required presence of mass-priest. Where celebrated. Publication of banns not yet necessary. On what days and between what persons celebration of marriage forbidden. Ordination of priests and deacons. Consecration of bishops. Times for ordination. Preliminary steps. Requisite age and qualifications of candidates. Case of those who had been twice married. Benediction of virgins. Their vows irrevocable. Investiture of knighthood. Inauguration of sovereigns. Whence derived. Coronation oath, how far agreeing with that taken by sovereigns at present. Consecration of new churches. How celebrated. Benediction of altar, furniture, &c. Reading of charters of endowment and other ceremonies. Building and ornamenting churches. Advances made after 7th century. Decorations of walls, altar, and books. Lights, incense, organ, paintings. Use made of paintings by Biscop. Remark upon this. Worship of the Cross, how far idolatrous. Observance of Sunday, how enforced. Protection given to the bondmen. Day of freedom. Services for Sunday. Laity ordered to attend their parish church. Festival days. Days of fasting. Fasting, how to be observed. Religious practices showing influence of religion over Anglo-Saxons. 1. Right of sanctuary. Whence this derived, and when recognised by the Church. Who might claim the benefit, and to what buildings it extended. Intention of the ancient laws on the subject. Privilege, how limited by the Anglo-Saxon laws. Extraordinary privilege of certain Churches. Violation of privilege, how punished. 2. Peace or Truce of the Church. To what seasons and especial occasions it extended. 3. Ordeal. In what cases allowed. Preliminary proceedings. Ordeal by corsned. By cold water. By hot water. Threefold and onefold ordeal. By hot iron. Remarks upon these, and upon the practice in general. When and through whose influence ordeal was abolished. Some remains of it continued much later. Trial by wager of battle. 4. Pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Rome. Causes which made Rome more attractive. Benefit derived by the Popes and clergy of Italy from the practice. Remarks on its supposed effects on the pilgrims. 5. Influence of the Anglo-Saxon clergy upon the question of slavery. Slaves whence derived by the Anglo-Saxons. State of the law with respect to slavery. Influence of clergy, for what purpose used. Manumission at the altar. Case of Wilfrid. Manumission by will. Denunciations in Theodore's Penitential. Legislation in favour of slaves. 6. Influence of the clergy used in behalf of the poor. Provision for the poor out of tithes. Enforced by law under Ethelred. What other funds were available for the purpose. These funds payable to cathedral. How distributed. Parochial funds and xenodochium. Facility of relief, how protected from abuse. Eleemosynary foundations, doles, &c. 7. Beneficial influence of the monastic orders. Their charity. Comparison of the good and evil effects of monachism upon society. The monks promoters of learning. Irish monasteries. Eminent Anglo-Saxon monks who aided in this work. Benedictine rule with respect to manual labour, how modified. Abbots of Wearmouth cultivators of fine arts. Libraries at York, Canterbury, &c. Monks transcribers of MSS., illuminators, and binders. Their services in transcribing the Holy Scriptures and preserving ancient literature. Their merits as builders of churches. Their application of the fine arts to the use of religious worship. Their knowledge of medicine. Their labours in the improvement of agriculture. Testified by Domesday. Especially in Northumbria and the eastern counties. Their mode of spending their revenues. The monks the promoters of missions. Missions of Irish monks. Of Egbert, Willibrord, and Boniface. Upon the whole, monks were benefactors of mankind. Beneficial influence of the Anglo-Saxon Church in spite of its errors. Good derived by us from it in the provision for the teachers of Christianity, the parochial system, and the union of Church and State.

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CHAP. XIII.

THE ANGLO-NORMAN CHURCH FROM THE CONQUEST TO THE DEATH OF WILLIAM RUFUS.

A.D. 1066—1100.

Results of the Conquest to the Church. Deposition of Stigand. Lanfranc. Sees filled with Normans. Wulfstan of Worcester. Ingulf. Guitmond. Exclusion of natives from preferment. Feudal tenures. Applied to Church property. Bishops and abbots on the same footing as other tenants-in-chief. Separation of the ecclesiastical courts from the civil. Conduct of William towards the Church. Excuse for his jealousy of the ecclesiastical power. Gregory VII. False Decretals. Conduct of William towards the Pope. Forbids the acknowledgment of a Pope by his subjects, or circulation of Papal letters, without his permission. Promises Peter-pence to the Pope, but refuses homage. Does not allow synodical decrees to be executed, or tenants-in-chief to be excommunicated, without his license. His arbitrary temper. Controversy about transubstantiation. Berengarius and Lanfranc. Clerical celibacy. Measures of Gregory. Council of Winchester. Question of independence of see of York.

Precedence of English bishops. Sees fixed at Salisbury, Chichester, Chester, and Lincoln. Clergy forbidden to judge in capital cases. Lanfranc metropolitan of Dublin. His acts. Accession of Rufus. Ranulph the Flambard. Practice of taking possession of Church lands during vacancy. Canterbury kept vacant some years. Circumstances which led to its being filled up. Anselm. He accepts the archbishopric upon certain conditions, which the king disregards. His enthronement. He is consecrated Primate of all Britain. His first offence, in not making a sufficient gift to the king. Second offence: his remonstrating against the seizure of Church property during vacancy. Third offence: his acknowledgment of Urban II. Remarks on Anselm's views as to necessity of Papal support. Council of Rockingham. His suffragans renounce their obedience. The king obtains the pall from Rome. Is overreached by the Papal legate. Issue of this contest. Anselm metropolitan of Irish bishops. His services to the king. The king quarrels with him again. He obtains leave to go to Rome. His reception by the Pope, who does not allow him to resign. His attendance at Council of Bari, and argument with respect to the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Ghost. Renewal of denunciation against lay investiture. Conduct of the king's envoy. Council at Rome. Prohibition against lay investiture once more renewed. Death of Rufus, and return of Anselm - - - - - - Pages 276—298.

CHAP. XIV.

THE ANGLO-NORMAN CHURCH DURING THE REIGN OF HENRY I.

A.D. 1100—1135.

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fuses to consecrate bishops invested by the king. His danger. He goes to Rome. Unsuccessful negotiations there. Interposition of the queen, and of Gondulf, bishop of Rochester, and monks of Canterbury, all without effect. The Pope excommunicates the king's advisers. Anselm resolves to excommunicate the king. His interview with him, and consequent settlement of the question. The king promises to abstain from levying fines on the married clergy, and other exactions. Return of Anselm. Consent of peers and bishops to the settlement. Manner of filling up the vacant sees. Anselm's account of the king's conduct with respect to episcopal appointments. Remarks upon the settlement of the controversy. Advantage gained by the spiritual power shown in Anselm's refusal to invest a person nominated by the queen. Similar adjustment effected by Concordat of Worms. Effects of the settlement. Grievance of purveyance. Independence of Anselm's ecclesiastical government. He is made regent and guardian of royal children. Anselm as a theologian. His treatise on the Incarnation. Observations of Dr. Milner. Right of Pope to send general legates to England disputed by Anselm. He obtains bull confirming primacy and other privileges to Church of Canterbury. Notwithstanding this, legates come over in the times of his successors. William of Corboyl obtains legatine authority for himself. Evidence of independence of national Church shown in resisting other encroachments. Paschal's interference about election of Archbishop Ralph. He complains to the king about appointment of bishops and holding of synods. Anselm's assertion of rights of the archbishop of Canterbury against his suffragans. Requires a profession of obedience. Opposition of the archbishop of York unsuccessful. This question again raised by Thurstan. He persists through life in refusing to make the profession of obedience. Metropolitan authority of Canterbury over Ireland and Scotland. Church of Wales. Instance of friendly intercourse between that Church and Church of England Henry subjects Welsh Church to Canterbury. Sees of Ely and Carlisle founded. That of Chester removed to Coventry. Anselm's synod of Westminster against simony and clerical marriage. Mention of impropriation of tithes and churches. Subsequent synods. Period after the Conquest favourable to monastic institutions. Exemption of monasteries from episcopal control. New orders founded. Monks of Cluny, Cistercians, Carthusians. Augustinian canons. Chapter of Carlisle formed of these. Military orders. Templars. Their wealth, vices, and consequent suppression. Their possessions given to the Hospitallers or Knights of St. John. Account of these and of Teutonic knights. Pages 299—320.

CHAP. XV.

THE ANGLO-NORMAN CHURCH FROM THE DEATH OF HENRY I. TO THE COUNCIL OF NORTHAMPTON.

A.D. 1135—1164.

Stephen supported by the Pope and clergy. His concessions and coronation oath. Thurstan archbishop of York. Battle of the Standard. Stephen quarrels with the clergy. Is summoned before a synod by the Pope's legate. Civil war and consequent state of the country. Synod at Winchester. Stephen quarrels with Archbishop Theobald, and is obliged to submit. Accession of Henry II. Thomas Becket. His early history and preferments. He is made chancellor. Duties and privileges of the office. His conduct and influence. Chosen to succeed Archbishop Theobald. Circumstances attending his election. His change of life. He goes to the Council of Tours. Origin of the quarrel with the king. Chief cause, question about right of clergy to be tried exclusively in their own courts. This question historically traced. Arbitrative jurisdiction of early Christians. Laws of Justinian and Charlemagne. Anglo-Saxon constitution. Dictum of Egbert. Laws of Alfred, &c. Ordinance of William the Conqueror. What included in jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts. Punishments how enforced. Canon law. Read at Oxford in reign of Stephen. Absolute exemption of the clergy from criminal jurisdiction of the state. Who entitled to this privilege. Number of crimes committed by the clergy. Remarks upon the evil of the immunity. Cases of De Brois and others. Conference between the king and the bishops. They promise to observe the customs, "saving their order." Becket afterwards omits the qualification. Council of Clarendon. Becket tries to escape from his promise, but is obliged to yield. Constitutions of Clarendon. Confirmed by assent of peers. Quære, whether Becket affixed his seal to them. His contrition and penance. He is absolved by the Pope. Tries to escape to France. Aggravation of the dispute with the king. He is summoned before the king's court, and afterwards to a great council at Northampton. Sentence passed upon him, which is commuted into a fine. Subsequent demands, and their injustice. His conference with the bishops, and subsequent proceedings. His charge to his suffragans. Celebrates mass, and goes with his cross before him to the palace. Proceedings in the hall. His suffragans appeal to the Pope. He refuses to hear the sentence of the peers. Scene on his leaving the hall. His flight.
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CHAP. XVI.

THE ANGLO-NORMAN CHURCH FROM THE COUNCIL OF NORTHAMPTON TO THE MURDER OF BECKET.

A. D. 1164—1171.

Becket's journey to Sens. Embassy from Henry to the Pope. The Pope gives audience to Becket. Condemns the Constitutions of Clarendon, and censures Becket. Refuses to accept his resignation. Becket goes to Pontigny. Violent measures of Henry, and cruelty to Becket's relatives and companions. Threatening language of Becket. He obtains office of legate. His proceedings at Vizelay, annulling the Constitutions of Clarendon, and excommunicating sundry persons. Henry's alarm and precautions. His support of the rival Pope. The Pope's letter to Foliot. Character of that prelate. His answer in behalf of the king. Henry allows his bishops to appeal to Rome. Their letter to Becket, and his answer. Henry obtains legates from the Pope to settle the dispute. This measure hostile to Becket. Powers of the legates restricted. Becket at Sens. The legates unable to effect anything. Nature of the negotiations during the next two years, and conduct of the principal parties. Becket unable to attack the king, but excommunicates others. Vacillation of the Pope. He annuls Becket's censures. Negotiation nearly successful in three several instances. Project for the coronation of Prince Henry. Becket tries to prevent the archbishop of York or any other bishop from performing it, but without success. The Pope's measures for putting an end to the dispute. He issues letters of suspension and excommunication against archbishop of York and other prelates. Conference at Fretville and reconciliation. Henry's sincerity questionable. His vexatious delays. Does not fulfil his promises. Becket's return to England. Sends the Papal letters before him. Conduct of the suspended and excommunicated bishops. Opposition to him on his landing. His triumphant journey to Canterbury. He offers to absolve the bishops. They refuse his terms, and set off to the king. Their project for filling up the vacant sees. Effect produced on Henry by their report. Conspiracy against Becket. His sermon on Christmas Day. Arrival of the conspirators at Canterbury, and their interview with Becket. He is forced to take refuge in the cathedral. His murder. Remarks on his character and principles. Reaction in his favour after his death. Treatment and fate of the murderers - - Pages 347—369.

CHAP. XVII.

THE ANGLO-NORMAN CHURCH FROM THE MURDER OF BECKET TO THE DEATH OF JOHN.

A.D. 1171—1216.

Effect produced on Henry by Becket's murder. His embassy to Rome. Grief of Alexander. He excommunicates Becket's murderers, and the abettors of the deed. Confirms interdict put on Henry's continental dominions, but it is not executed. His projects for the conquest of Ireland. Grant of that country from Pope Adrian IV., the only Englishman who was ever Pope. Synod of Cashel. Conference with the Papal legates at Avranches. Oath taken by Henry. Quære, whether it involved a promise of feudal vassalage. He is absolved. Constitutions of Clarendon, how far repealed. Articles agreed upon at Northampton as to the claims of the clergy. Archbishop of York restored, and Foliot absolved. Cathedral of Canterbury restored after its desecration. Election of Archbishop Richard. Opposed by the young king, and confirmed by the Pope. Other sees, how filled up. Pope's confirmation required. Canonisation of Becket. Reputed miracles. Pilgrimages to his tomb. Contrition of Henry. His humiliation and penance. Effects ascribed to this. Henry declines the kingdom of Jerusalem. Effects produced by the news of the taking of the holy city. Henry and Philip Augustus take the cross. Council at Geddington levies a tenth for the crusade. Henry's latter years and death. Character of Archbishop Richard. His remonstrance to the young king. His canons and remonstrance against Papal exemption of abbeys. Question of superiority of Church of England over that of Scotland. Independence of the latter confirmed by the Pope. Election of Archbishop Baldwin. He becomes a crusader, and dies at Acre. Secular pursuits of bishops of Richard I.'s reign. Longchamps of Ely, Hugh of Durham, Hubert of Sarum, the successor of Baldwin, Geoffrey of York. Bull of Pope Alexander III., respecting the clergy of Berkshire. Project of a college of secular canons at Ackington and at Lambeth finally unsuccessful. Nomination of bishops by the Norman kings. Claim of suffragan bishops to assist at election of archbishop of Canterbury. Resisted by prior and monks of Christchurch. Growth of Papal supremacy in England. How shown. Character of King John. Pope Innocent III. His principles, language, and acts. Double election on the death of Archbishop Hubert. Decision of Innocent. Stephen Langton elected at Rome. Innocent's letter and presents to John. John takes vengeance on the monks. Threatens the Pope.

Reply of Innocent. He threatens an interdict. This punishment common in the 11th and 12th centuries, but unknown in earlier times. Publication of the interdict, and its effects. John's retaliation upon the clergy and monks. Innocent excommunicates him. Punishment inflicted on the archdeacon of Norwich. John still supported by some of the bishops. Negotiates with Langton, and, according to Matthew Paris, offers to turn Mussulman. Sentence of deposition issued, and the kingdom offered to Philip of France, and crusade proclaimed against John. Preparations for defence. Message from Pandulph, who persuades John to submit. Prophecy of Peter. John executes a charter, with sundry concessions. Surrenders his kingdoms to hold as fiefs of the Pope and takes the oath of fealty. Execution of Peter. Remarks on the surrender. Lingard's palliation of it. His parallel cases not in point. Consent of the barons to the act, why given. Not intended by them as a bonâ fide transaction, nor so regarded afterwards. Tribute discontinued by Edward I. Quære, whether arrears paid by Edward II. Demanded of Edward III. and refused. Resolution of the parliament. Results of the surrender. John's nobles refuse to follow an excommunicated prince. Return of Langton and the other exiles. John absolved. He repeats his oath of fealty. His oath to renew the good laws of his ancestors, &c. dictated by Langton. The Pope's legate fills up vacant churches. He is opposed by Langton, who appeals to the Pope. Change in the Papal policy towards John. Interdict revoked. John takes the oath of fealty a third time. His contest with the barons. Leading part taken by Langton. Suspension of Langton for refusing to excommunicate the barons. Langton present at Council of Lateran, but not allowed to return to England during John's reign. Change in John's policy to the Church. Charter of free election to the chapters. Confirmed by Magna Charta. Declarations of the Great Charter respecting the Church. John appeals to Innocent as his liege lord, who presumes to annul Great Charter. Conduct of the barons, and measures of Innocent. His death and John's. The Great Charter finally prevails. Its confirmations in Henry III.'s reign - - - Pages 370—399.

CHAP. XVIII.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND DURING THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES, FROM THE DEATH OF JOHN TO THE AGE OF WYCLIFFE.

A.D. 1216—1377.

Division of the subject of the chapter into three heads. I. The English Church in its relation to the see of Rome, with a sketch of Papal

encroachments. I. 1. Papal interference with elections of chapters, and its consequences. Instances given. Popes impose oath of fealty on bishops. Attempt of Popes to bestow temporalities of sees resisted. Bishops obliged to renounce clauses in bulls prejudicial to the crown. 2. Papal provisions. Origin of these. Mandats. Benefices vacant in curiâ. Pluralities held by foreigners. Remonstrance of English barons against violation of rights of patronage. Of English envoys at Council of Lyons against the intrusion of foreigners. Opposition of the clergy to provisions. Grosstête. His celebrated letter to the Pope. Nothing effectual done till the reign of Edward III. Statute of Provisors. Of Premunire. Declaration as to the royal supremacy in the preamble of the statute. 3. Papal tallages on clergy. When they commenced. Resistance to them ineffectual, except in Scotland. 4. Annates or firstfruits, by whom invented, and what. 5. Growth of national independence, notwithstanding these encroachments. Example of Grosstête. His learning, and administration of his diocese. Obliged to appear before Papal court. Result of this. Quære, whether he was excommunicated. How far Protestant. Opinion of Mr. Hallam. His view of the obedience due to the Roman see. Nobles of 13th century, how far independent. They reject Boniface VIII.'s claim to Scotland. 6. Synods held by Papal legates. Canons of Otho and Othobon. Commendams. 7. Encouragement given by see of Rome to mendicant orders. Carmelites. Dominicans. Origin of Inquisition. Franciscans. Augustinian Eremites. Success of mendicants. Privileges conferred by Popes. Introduction into England, and consequences. Kilwardby and Peckham. Relaxation of rule of poverty. Roger Bacon. Thomas Aquinas. Contests of Franciscans and Dominicans, and schism among the former. Fratricelli. Decline of the Papal power. Boniface VIII. Bull "Unam Sanctam." Occam. Dante. Remarks on the Papal claim of temporal supremacy. Admission of Lingard. II. The Church in its domestic and political state. II. 1. Temporal condition of the clergy. Extent of their landed possessions. Rank of the archbishops and chancellor. Higher clergy members of the Great Council. Inferior clergy had their representatives in parliament. Abuses arising from this temporal position. Military bishops. Bishops politicians and statesmen. Petition of parliament of Edward III. for the exclusion of the clergy from offices of state partially successful. Services of bishops in their political capacity. Langton. Winchelsey. Bishops eminent in other respects. Edmund Rich, Sewell, Poore, Thorsby. 2. Exemption of clergy from jurisdiction of state. Progress of the struggle between the temporal and ecclesiastical courts, from Henry III.'s reign. Supremacy of the common law asserted. Declaration of barons at Merton. Writs of prohibi-

tion. Archbishop Boniface's synods. Their language complained of by Henry III. to the Pope. Statutes "Circumspecte agatis," and "Articuli Cleri." Statute of Edward I., limiting privilege of clergy in criminal charges. Constitution of Archbishop Islep for punishment of clergy guilty of capital offence. Cases showing the extent to which this privilege was carried. Punishment inflicted by ecclesiastical courts. Excommunication, for what offences imposed. Forms of general excommunication. Civil consequences. Arrest of excommunicated persons. 3. Fiscal exemption of clergy. Aids demanded of them by kings with the support of the Pope. Violent measures of Edward I. Clergy obtain a bull from Boniface VIII. in favour of their privilege. For this they are outlawed. Resistance of Winchelsey. Result of the contest, and security obtained against illegal taxation. 4. Provincial synod, or convocation. When it took its modern form, by which parochial clergy sent their proctors. From what time consent of clergy appears to have been generally asked to proceedings. Convocation of York independent. King's writ, how far necessary. Could not meet against king's command, or establish anything against prerogative. Instances of canons against prerogative being revoked. Diocesan synods. Independent of, and sometimes opposed to, provincial. Instance of one which enjoins giving of cup to laity. 5. Archdeacon and rural dean. Rank of the former next to the bishop. He had a court. His duties. Power to suspend the clergy, and fine the churchwardens. Liabilities of parishioners in respect of repairs, &c. Cognisance of matrimonial causes given to archdeacon, but not to rural dean. Duties of the latter office. Exactions, &c. forbidden to both. Procurations, what, and how regulated. 6. Lay patronage of benefices. Churches how conferred by laymen. Origin of institution. What rights implied in this. Question of sufficiency of learning decided by certificate of archbishop. Induction, what, and by whom performed. Lapse. Canons against pluralities. 7. Restrictions upon alienation and acquisition of property by clergy and monks. Penalty on alienation. Exception in case of bishops. Appropriation of benefices, what. In whose favour commonly made. Provision of canons for the appointment and maintenance of vicar and distribution of alms. Interference of legislature. Act of Henry IV. for perpetual endowment of vicar. Distinction between rectories and vicarages. Importance of this act. Monks and clergy restricted from acquiring property. Origin of this restriction. Lands in mortmain, what. Prohibition of Magna Charta. Forfeiture under 7 Edward I. III. Internal state of Church with reference to doctrine and discipline. III. 1. Transubstantiation. Decrees of Council of Lateran. Quære, how far accepted by English Church. Transubstantiation received in England, as shown by Peckham's constitutions. Communion in one kind sanctioned by those canons. Festival of Corpus Christi. Transubstantiation supported by the mendicants. Their notion of separation of accidents from substance. 2. Honour paid to the Virgin Mary. Notion of her immaculate conception. Opposed by St. Bernard. Controverted between Franciscans and Dominicans. Never yet imposed as an article of faith. Festival in honour of her conception. 3. Indulgences. Origin of them. Doctrine of works of supererogation maintained by Thomas Aquinas. Power to grant indulgences given to the mendicants. How abused by them. 4. Pilgrimages to particular shrines. Our Lady of Walsingham. Thomas of Canterbury. Testimony of Erasmus to wealth of his shrine. 5. Foundation of chantries. 6. Moral state of the clergy. Dispensing power of the Pope. Testimony of the canons to the simony and other bad practices and incontinence of the clergy. Their ignorance and neglect of duty. Their vicious lives in the time of Wycliffe. Moral state of the monastic orders. Testimony of the canons. Opinion of Mr. Hallam. Brief notice of the improvements in ecclesiastical architecture after the 12th century. Introduction of pointed arch. Early English, decorated English, florid or perpendicular style - - - Pages 400—438.

CHAP. XIX.

THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JOHN WYCLIFFE.

A.D. 1356—1384.

The Waldenses. Their faith, whence derived. Claudius of Turin. "The Noble Lesson." Peter Waldo. Their character. Doubt about their orders. Cathari and Albigenses, whence derived. Persecution of some of them at Oxford. Innocent III.'s crusade against the Albigenses. Simon de Montfort. Rise of other sectaries. State of knowledge of the Holy Scriptures in the 12th century. Two schools of theologians. The scholastic divines. Knowledge of the Scriptures by the laity. Prohibition of Council of Toulouse. State of the people of England in 13th century. Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Metrical chronicles in English. The works of the Hermit of Hampole. Piers Plowman. Chaucer. Archbishops Bradwardine and Fitzralph, precursors of Wycliffe. Birth, education, and studies of Wycliffe. He is called the Evangelic Doctor. His first work. Attacks mendicant orders. Doctrine of development imputed to them. Wycliffe's preferments. He is ejected from

Canterbury Hall by Langham, and appeals to the Pope. Papal decision against him confirmed by the crown. This decision not the cause of his subsequent conduct. His tract against the payment of tribute to the Pope. His lectures at Oxford. Named a commissioner to treat with the Pope about provisions. Result of the negotiations. He receives further preferment. He is cited before his ordinary at St. Paul's. Supported by John of Gaunt. Tumult, and adjournment of the proceedings. Question of retaining money required by the Pope, referred to Wycliffe. Papal bulls against him. University debate whether they shall not reject Papal mandate. Wycliffe appears before delegates, and escapes a second time. Statements of his opinions presented to them and to parliament. Boldness of his language respecting the Pope. His opinion on Church endowments open to censure. His use of the word alms. His doctrine that dominion is founded on grace. It did not lead to the insurrection of the peasantry. Wycliffe not a political incendiary, but an opponent of Church abuses. The great schism, and Wycliffe's tract against the Papacy. Applies the term Antichrist to the Pope. Faithfulness of his parochial teaching. He appeals exclusively to the Scriptures. His Poor Priests. His translation of the Bible. Statement of Lingard as to the effect of the work. No previous attempt at version of the whole Bible. No free access to the Scriptures previously. Complaint of Knighton, the Romish historian. How far clergy permitted the laity to have access to the Scriptures. Archbishop Arundel's statement about Queen Anne. Bill to forbid reading of Scriptures by laity rejected. Constitution of Arundel against making or reading translations. Reasons assigned by Wycliffe for giving the Scriptures to the laity. Remarks on the right of private judgment. Praise of Wycliffe for asserting the right of all to read the Bible. Multiplication of copies of his translation. Price of his Testament. Desire for knowledge of the Scriptures. Perseverance in reading them, in spite of persecution. Wycliffe's conclusions against transubstantiation condemned by the chancellor of Oxford and a synod. He appeals to the king. Remarks upon this proceeding. He is deserted by the duke of Lancaster. Murder of Archbishop Sudbury. Courtney succeeds. The former moderate in his views. Courtney's synod of the Preaching Friars condemns ten of Wycliffe's conclusions as heretical, and fourteen as erroneous. By whom decree signed. Measures taken for suppressing them. Procession to St. Paul's. Bishops petition against the Lollards. Mosheim's derivation of the word. Doctrines complained of. Royal ordinance for arrest of preachers. Entered on parliament roll, though it did not receive assent of parliament. Never since repealed, though obsolete. Proceedings of Courtney. Wycliffe's followers

summoned before synod of Preaching Friars, but not himself. Reason of this. His complaint to the king and parliament. Finds no countenance from the latter. Summoned before convocation at Oxford. It has been said that he recanted. Falsehood of this shown by reference to his two confessions. Remarks upon his Latin confession. Consequences of the confessions. His banishment from Oxford. His paralytic seizure. His letter to Pope Urban VI. He denounces the crusade in behalf of that Pontiff. His death. His merits as a Reformer. His opinions on Church endowments, the episcopal office, confirmation, church music. Wycliffe a prototype of the Puritans. He rejected some errors of the Church of Rome, and maintained others. His opinions on the Papal supremacy, purgatory, masses, &c. for the dead, images, number of sacraments, and penance. Censure of Melancthon with respect to his views of the Lord's Supper, and justification, how far just. His great glory the assertion of supremacy of the Scriptures, and the right of all to read them - - - - - - Pages 439—473.

CHAP. XX.

THE ENGLISH CHURCH, FROM THE DEATH OF WYCLIFFE TO THE END OF HENRY VII.'S REIGN.

A. D. 1384—1509.

Circulation of Wycliffe's writings in Bohemia. Opinions of Huss and Jerome of Prague. Decree of the Council of Constance with respect to his writings and the disinterment of his bones. When and by whom carried into effect. Proceedings against the Poor Priests. Cases of Hereford, Repingdon, Aston, Purvey, Swinderby. Remarks on the system of the Poor Priests. Their success. Spirit and opinions of the Lollards objectionable. Their petition to parliament in 1394. Their factious proceedings, and measures taken to oppose them. Arundel primate. Form of oath administered by him when archbishop of York. Convocation condemn Wycliffe's "Trialogus." Arundel banished, and restored under Henry IV. Zeal of that prince against the Lollards. Principle of persecution how far adopted by the Church in earlier times. Decree of the Council of Lateran, in 1215. State of the law in England with respect to apostasy and heresy. New statute of Henry IV. Sawtre burnt for denying transubstantiation. He is said to have been the first who suffered death for heresy. Badby's case. Examination of Thorpe. Lollard notions about unlicensed preaching and Church property. Parliamentary scheme for appropriating Church revenues, how defeated. Per-

secuting spirit of the age. Arundel's efforts to prevent access to religious knowledge. Unsuccessful attempt to suppress Wycliffe's books. Arundel's constitutions at Oxford against the Lollards. Language of these seems to imply progress of Wycliffe's opinions at Oxford. Question of authenticity of Oxford testimonial in Wycliffe's favour. Constitution for suppressing heresy in the university. The archbishop's right to visit the university questioned. Wycliffe's writings censured by Oxford divines. The censure confirmed by the archbishop and the Pope. Henry V. Quære, whether a zealous persecutor. Violence of the Lollards. Lord Cobham. Account of the proceedings against him. His confession of faith. His opinion of Wycliffe. His condemnation. Obscurity of his subsequent history. Recantation falsely imputed to him. His escape. Affair of St. Giles's Fields. Quære, whether he conspired against the government. His execution. Statute of Henry V. against the Lollards, requiring oath to be taken by all official persons. Acts of the Lollards no justification of persecution. Chicheley succeeds to the primacy. Burning of Claydon. Inquisitorial constitution of Chicheley. Case of Taylor. Councils of Pisa and Constance. Hallam bishop of Salisbury, and Ullerston. Hopes of reform extinguished by the election of Martin V. Reginald Pecock. His principle of toleration. His defence of the bishops and of Papal provisions, &c. His Repressor in answer to the Lollards. Comparison of him to Hooker. He is translated to Chichester. His Treatise of Faith. Opposes infallibility of clergy, and maintains supremacy of Scripture as a rule of faith. He is expelled from the House of Lords, and accused of heresy. His abjuration. His deprivation and imprisonment for life. His books burnt. Clause inserted in statutes of King's College, Cambridge. Continuation of persecution. Severities of Henry VII.'s reign. Bishop Nix. Treatment of those who recanted. Lollards not extinguished by persecution. Evasion of the statutes against provisions. Martin V. denounces the statute of Premunire, and tries in vain to obtain its repeal. His concordat with English nation. Episcopal and royal founders of colleges. Archbishop Bourchier assists in introducing printing. Concluding remarks on these foundations - - - - - Pages 474—504.

CHURCH HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRITISH CHURCH BEFORE THE MISSION OF AUGUSTINE.

In writing a history of the Church of England, it is necessary to guard against two opposite errors, which are generally entertained, even among well educated men, with respect to this subject. It is notorious that many persons consider the Church of England to be a national institution, which had its first origin from the despotic will of one sovereign, Henry VIII., which was brought very near to maturity in the happier reign of his son, and which, having been suppressed for a time during the persecutions of Mary, substantially attained the form in which it now exists, under the auspices of the glorious Queen Elizabeth. This representation of the case, which is obviously founded on a narrow and mistaken definition of the word Church, as comprehending a certain form of doctrine and ritual, and nothing more, naturally gives offence to all who have been taught to regard the Church of Christ, in its scriptural idea, as a body belonging to all times and places, as an edifice "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Such persons feel that, if the present Church of England be a true and living member of that body, it must trace its origin from a higher source than the will of sovereigns or parliaments; that it must at least have something in common with the Church that went before it; that it must ultimately be connected by sure and firm links with that little flock, that met in an upper chamber in Jerusalem to choose a successor to the traitor Judas. In tracing this connection, a question involving much controversy arises, as to the relations existing between the Church of England before the Reformation, and the see of Rome,—whether our ancestors merely looked to the Pope for guidance, direction, and counsel, or whether the acknowledgment of his supremacy was made then, as it is in the modern Church of Rome, a necessary condition of communion, without which there was no salvation. Some of our divines, anxious to diminish, as far as possible, the revolutionary nature of the change made in our Church at the Reformation, have fallen into the second error to which allusion has been made above, by representing that change, not so much in the light of a return to the doctrines of the primitive Christian Church of the first three centuries, as of a restoration to such a state of independence of the Church of Rome and comparative freedom from her corruptions, as they suppose to have existed in England previously to the Norman Conquest. Some of these writers have dwelt more exclusively on the probable independence of the ancient British Church, as it existed before the Saxon invasion, and have constructed a magnificent theory out of the very slender historical materials that have survived that period: others have gone so far as to deny in part the religious debt that England owes to Rome for the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, and in their anxiety to make out an exact identity between the Church of Elizabeth's time, and that of the Anglo-Saxon period, have shut their eyes to the most striking proofs of the dependence of the Saxon Church on the see of Rome. The vindication of the proper position of the Anglican Church, as a member of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, seems hardly to require such reasoning as this.

A member of the Anglican communion may be firmly persuaded that the supremacy of the Pope is an usurpation, unknown to the first three or four centuries of Christianity, founded on falsehood, supported in some instances by fraud, and imposed upon a simple and uninquiring age with all the prestige derived from the name of an imperial city, once the queen of nations, and even in its decay nearly the first city of the world; and yet he may very probably conclude that the gradual union of the nations of Western Europe under one spiritual head, during the interval between the dissolution of the Western Roman Empire and the Papacy of Hildebrand, was a very natural result, and may even regard it in the light of a providential arrangement for the security of the relics of Scriptural truth, against the barbarism of the rudest period of the world. In like manner with respect to corruptions of doctrine, while he cordially protests against those additions to the faith, which first received the stamp of authority at the Council of Trent, he may admit, without compromising his position in the least, that many of those errors were in their first origin to be ascribed, not altogether so much to Romish influence, as to the general ignorance that prevailed through the world for many centuries; and if his Anglo-Saxon ancestors partook of that ignorance, while he laments their errors, he durst not misrepresent the facts.

Having stated these general principles, which Protestant historians, in the heat of controversy, seem to me to have too much lost sight of, I proceed to give a brief sketch of the history of the Church of Christ, as it existed in England, from the earliest times. And if I mistake not, it will not be difficult, without adopting any far-fetched theory on the subject, to show, that some at least of the broad principles maintained at the Reformation were not new in England, but had been acted upon in old times by men whom the historians of the Romish communion have delighted to honour, and whose memory should be precious to every true Englishman.

We have no certain testimony either as to the time at which, or the persons by whom, the gospel of Christ was first conveyed to the ancient inhabitants of Britain. Some traditions have ascribed the work of Britain's conversion to Joseph of Arimathea, but modern criticism has pronounced this tale certainly fabulous. James the elder, Simon Zelotes, and St. Peter, have also been named as the apostles of Britain, but without any authority. There seems more probability in the tradition, which says that St. Philip preached the gospel in Gaul and afterwards in Britain.[1] From a passage of Clement of Rome (a writer of the apostolic age, and a companion of St. Paul), in which he speaks of that apostle having taught the whole world righteousness, and for that end travelled even to *the utmost bounds of the west*, the conversion of Britain has been plausibly ascribed to the great Apostle of the Gentiles. A similar inference has been drawn from two passages of St. Jerome, in which he speaks of St. Paul's preaching in the western parts, and from the eastern to the western ocean. Whatever degree of plausibility there may be in this conjecture, it seems very probable, that converts to the faith were made from among the natives of Britain during the lifetime of that apostle.[2] When we come to the 2nd century, we find Justin Martyr asserting in very comprehensive terms, which may fairly be taken to include Britain, that there was no race of men existing anywhere in his time, among whom prayers and thanksgivings were not offered up to the Father and Creator of the universe, through the name of the crucified Jesus. Irenæus, a writer somewhat later than Justin, speaks of the faith of the German, Spanish, and Celtic Churches in language which, as a Celtic race then inhabited Britain, may be regarded as equally comprehensive with that of Justin. Tertullian, who wrote at the end of the same century, puts the matter out of all doubt, by speaking of the districts of Britain that were inaccessible to the Roman arms, but which had been subdued under the yoke of Christ. A good deal of controversy has been raised with respect to a petty prince of Britain, of the name of Lucius, who is said by Bede, the Anglo-Saxon historian, to have sent a letter to Eleutherius, bishop of Rome, in the latter part of the 2nd century, to desire that he might be made a Christian through his instruction, and to have obtained his pious request.[1] It has been observed that the story is liable to suspicion, for we know not from what source Bede, at the distance of five centuries, derived his information; and some writers have decidedly pronounced it to be a fable. Supposing, however, the main parts of the story to be true, it is perfectly consistent with the supposition of Christianity having been introduced into Britain previously to Lucius's time. As to the motives which might have prompted the embassy, it was natural at that time that persons, wishing for information about the Christian religion, should apply to Rome, not from any notion of a spiritual supremacy being vested in the bishop of Rome, of which that age certainly knew nothing, but owing to the fact, that a resort was made thither from all places, because of its being the imperial city.[2]

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[1] Burton's Eccles. Hist. p. 213.

[2] Compare 2 Tim. iv. 21. with Martial's Epigrams, lib. iv. 13., xi. 53.; Lingard's Anglo-Saxon Church, vol. i. p. 2.

With the exception of some passing notices of ecclesiastical writers of the 3rd century, we meet with nothing relating to the British Church, until the reign of the Roman emperor Diocletian, at the latter part of that century. Britain, we must bear in mind, had, from the time of the conquest by Agricola at the latter end of the 1st century, formed a regular province of the Roman empire; but in the earlier part of Diocletian's reign, the possession of the island was successfully contested by two usurpers, Carausius and

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[1] Bede's Eccles. Hist. lib. i. cap. 4.
[2] Iren. adv. Hær. lib. iii. cap. 3.

Allectus, who for several years maintained their independence. At that time, in some parts of the empire, "the gospel was not only making rapid progress, but the professors of it were enjoying ample toleration. Persons in high stations allowed not only their servants, but their wives and children, to profess themselves Christians. Places about the court, and even in the imperial household, were filled by Christians; and, what is more remarkable, Christians were appointed to the government of provinces, with an express exception in their favour for not being obliged to assist at the usual sacrifices. Objections were no longer made to the Christians meeting in churches of their own; and these buildings began to assume an appearance of architectural splendour."[1]

Diocletian, A. D. 286, took for his colleague in the government Maximianus Herculeus, who had Spain, Italy, Gaul, and Britain for his portion of the empire. The edicts against the Christians, which have made Diocletian's persecution notorious, were not published till the year 303; but it seems that sundry acts of persecution took place some time previously, in the countries which were subject to the dominion of Herculeus. Although there is great difficulty in ascertaining the date of the commencement of the persecution in Britain, it may with some probability be fixed about the time at which Herculeus assumed the imperial purple.[2] History has recorded the names of the earliest British martyrs, Aaron and Julius, citizens of the Welsh city of Caarleon upon Usk; and Alban, an inhabitant of the Roman town of Verulam, in Hertfordshire, which stood near the site of what has since been called, in honour of the martyr, St. Alban's. Alban was at the commencement of the persecution a Pagan; but, having been induced by motives of humanity to shelter a Christian priest from the fury of the heathens, was, through his influence, converted to the Christian faith. The priest's retreat being discovered, Alban presented himself, disguised in his guest's clothes, to the fury of his pursuers, and was thereupon dragged before the Roman governor. Being threatened with the punishment due to the person whom he had protected, he at once boldly avowed himself a Christian. Torture was then administered to him, but nothing could shake his constancy, and so he was ordered to be beheaded. He suffered death on a woody eminence overlooking the town, and in after-times a stately abbey was erected on the spot in memory of the first British martyr, the church of which still stands, a noble monument of ancient Christianity in Britain. From 292 to 311, during the government of Constantius Chlorus, and his son Constantine, it is probable that the persecution either abated, or ceased altogether; and in 311 an edict of general toleration was published through the empire, the object of which was to secure full liberty to the Christians. The churches that had been destroyed were rebuilt, and the knowledge of the gospel began to spread and prevail without any material obstacle. From this period we may date the flourishing state of the British Church; here for the first time we meet with instances of its taking part in the councils, held for the purpose of regulating the faith and discipline of the universal Church; and here, also, we have plain proof, that in its form of government it resembled every other Church which took its origin from apostolic times, by being under the dominion of bishops.

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[1] Burton's Eccles. Hist. p. 597.

[2] Ibid., note.

At the Council of Arles, in France, called by Constantine, the first Christian emperor, A.D. 314, for the purpose of putting an end to the schism of the Donatists[1], it appears, from the subscriptions to the canons of the council, that three British bishops were present; viz., Eborius of York, Restitutus of London, and Adelphius of Colonia Londinensium, the modern name of which is uncertain. This council was followed eleven years later by the Council of Nice (the first of the four great general councils,) called for the purpose of putting an end to the Arian heresy, and one the authority of which has always been regarded with the highest reverence in every orthodox branch of the universal Church. At this council it is highly probable, although there is no positive evidence of the fact, that British bishops were present. There is also good reason for concluding that episcopal delegates from Britain were present at other councils, that were summoned during the present century with respect to the Arian heresy; viz. at the Council of Sardica, in Dacia, A. D. 347, and at that of Rimini, in Italy, A. D. 359. With respect to the last-named council, it is stated by Sulpicius Severus, a Christian historian of the 4th century, that the Emperor Constantius having offered to pay the expenses of the bishops who attended it, the offer was refused by all, except three from Britain, whose poverty compelled them to receive assistance, which they deemed it more honourable to derive from the public purse than from those of their colleagues.

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[1] Donatists, so called from Donatus, the leader of a schism at Carthage, which, from A. D. 312 for more than a century, distracted the African Church with the contending claims of rival successions of bishops, and led to civil war and much bloodshed.

Up to this time, also, there is reason to believe that the British Church remained sound in the orthodox faith of Nice. Later, however, in the century we are informed, in highly figurative language, by Gildas (a British historian of the 6th century), that Arianism began to prevail in Britain. One heresy was quickly followed by another. Pelagius, otherwise called Morgan, a native of Britain, began to attract attention, at the latter end of the 4th or the beginning of the 5th century, by his writings against the doctrines of original sin and the necessity of Divine grace. The refutation of these doctrines employed the pen, and gave rise to some of the most elaborate works of that great Father of the Church, Augustine, bishop of Hippo. It does not appear that Pelagius visited Britain himself after he had acquired this notoriety. His opinions were, however, propagated there by others with such success, that the orthodox party in Britain found it necessary, according to Bede, to call in the assistance of their neighbours and brethren in Gaul for the refutation of the prevailing errors. The result was, that a synod of Gallic bishops was holden, and Germanus bishop of Auxerre, and Lupus bishop of Troyes were chosen to go into Britain, to confirm it in the faith. According to another account, which has the support of a cotemporary writer [1], Celestine, the Pope of Rome, in his anxiety to preserve the orthodox faith of the Britons, sent Germanus, as his vicar, to bring them back to the Catholic faith. Supposing this to be the true account of the matter, it cannot much aid the cause of the Papal supremacy, which it is intended to support, unless it can be shown (of which there is no evidence) that the Britons received, and formally acknowledged Germanus in the capacity of Papal vicar. Whatever may have been the moving cause of the mission (and it is possible that both these accounts may be founded in fact) the missionaries were received with great joy, and preached with great success in refutation of the Pelagian errors. At a meeting held at Verulam, the heads of the Pelagian party were invited to a public disputation, which terminated in the complete triumph of orthodoxy. Germanus having, according to the prevalent superstition of the age, brought some supposed relics of holy men with him, deposited these relics in the tomb of the martyr Alban, and then returned to Gaul. Soon afterwards, on account of the revival of Pelagianism, he was summoned to pay a second visit to Britain, which was followed by similar results;

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[1] Prosper, a Gaul, who was secretary to Pope Celestine.

and on this occasion the Pelagian teachers were, in conformity with an edict of the Emperor Valentinian, banished from the country.

And now, in the middle of the 5th century, we come to a very dark period in the annals of our country, the civil and ecclesiastical history of which are, for a century and a half, involved in the greatest obscurity. The western empire of Rome, invaded on all sides by swarms of barbarians, was fast approaching to destruction. Britain had, even from the middle of the 4th century, suffered severely from the inroads of the Picts and Scots, tribes of the same Celtic family as the Britons, who had originally passed over from Ireland, and then occupied different parts of Scotland.[1] As long as the Roman forces remained in the country, there was no difficulty in repelling these attacks ; but in 383 a successful soldier of the name of Maximus, having proclaimed himself emperor, and obtained possession of Gaul and Spain, found it necessary, for the establishment of his power, to withdraw the bulk of the Roman legions from Britain. The withdrawal of the legions, however, was not accomplished immediately and at once; at the repeated prayers of the Britons occasional aid was afforded: at length, early in the 5th century, the island was finally abandoned without defence to the invasions of the Picts and Scots from the north, and those of the Saxon pirates from the sea. The country seems, after the departure of the Romans, to have been ruled by the authority of the clergy, the nobles, and the municipal towns. Thirty-three cities were distinguished above the rest by their privileges, and of these, probably, each had its bishop. These bishops met in synods to regulate the affairs of the Church. Independence, however, seems only to have led to intestine feuds. Torn up into factions, the Britons offered no power of resistance to foreign foes, who poured in upon them on all sides.[1]

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[1] Lappenberg's History of England under the Anglo-Saxon kings, by Thorpe, vol. i. p. 55.

And here we should mention, that, according to the account which has generally been received as historical truth, the Britons at this time, being harassed beyond measure by the ravages of the Picts and Scots, agreed with their king Vortigern to call over to their aid, from the parts beyond the sea, the Saxon nation.[2] The name of Saxons included the three principal tribes of Saxons, Angles, and Jutes, who, before their immigration, inhabited the modern countries of Sleswick, Holstein, and Jutland, and also the coast lying between the mouths of the Elbe and the Rhine. To these were probably added adventurers from other tribes: they were all pagans, but differed from each other both in dialect, and in customs, which differences may be traced in the several kingdoms which they founded. Of these the Jutes are said to have settled in Kent and the Isle of Wight; the Saxons in Middlesex, Essex, Sussex, and the country afterwards called Wessex; the Angles in the northern, eastern, and central parts of the island, in what were afterwards the kingdoms of Northumbria, East Anglia, and Mercia. The account further states, that the first detachment of the invaders came over in three long ships, under the command of two brothers, Hengist and Horsa. These, having defeated the northern invaders, reported to their own countrymen the fertility of the land, and the cowardice of the Britons, and so allured other adventurers, who came over in swarms into the island. Having received these reinforcements, they turned their swords against their employers, and ravaged and plundered the whole country, and destroyed the people with fire and sword from the eastern to the western sea. The Britons, however, made a long and stubborn resistance under various leaders, of whom Ambrosius Aurelius is said to have been of Roman descent, and King Arthur is widely celebrated as a hero of poetry and romance. The result, however, was that the whole of what is now called England (with the exception of the western parts into which the defeated Britons retired) was completely subdued by the Saxons. The memorials together with the worship of Christianity were abolished throughout the conquered territory: the Britons who still maintained that faith were confined, with their religion, to Wales, Cornwall, Devonshire, Cumberland, and Lancashire, and the territories called Reged and Strathcluyd, in the south and south-east of Scotland, in all of which independent British princes were established.[1] At the end of 150 years from the time when the invasion of Hengist and Horsa is reported to have taken place, *i. e.* at the date of the mission of Augustine, the conquered territory was divided into eight separate kingdoms, under independent chieftains, all of whom were heathen.

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[1] Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chap. xxxi.; Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. i. pp. 216—218.

[2] Bede, lib. i. caps. 15, 16.

With respect to this commonly received account of the conquest of England by the Saxons, modern criticism has shown that it is founded on a confused mass of traditions, chiefly of a poetical or mythical character, from which it is impossible now to extract the true details of the events.[2] Dr. Lappenberg observes, that the immigration of the Saxons did not take place in great bodies, but gradually, frequently by very small settlements, which spread themselves over the greater part of England and the south of Scotland during the course of one or two centuries; and he calls the acquisition of Britain by the Saxons less a conquest, than a progressive usurpation of British territory by detached hordes. The same writer also considers it probable that the conquerors inter-married with British women; and that though many Britons fled, yet others remained peaceably, and preserved their previous rights; in proof of which he refers to the laws of King Ine of Wessex at the end of the 7th century, which make no material distinction in rights between the Welshman (*i. e.* the ancient Briton) and the Saxon.[1] Mr. Kemble, taking much the same view of the case, collects from various ancient historical authorities the extreme "probability that bodies more or less numerous of coast Germans, perhaps actually of Saxons and Angles, had colonised the eastern shores of England long before the time generally assumed for their advent."[2]

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[1] Lappenberg, vol. i. pp. 119—123.

[2] Kemble's Saxons in England, vol. i. chap. 1., compared with Lappenberg, vol. i. pp. 68—125.

The same writer considers the details of the alleged long and doubtful struggle between the Britons and Saxons improbable; and concludes, that though some nobler spirits may have preferred exile or emigration, the mass of the people accustomed to Roman rule, or the oppression of native princes, probably suffered little by a change of masters, and did little to avoid it.

If the details of the civil history of Britain in the 5th and 6th centuries are so doubtful, we cannot be surprised at finding its ecclesiastical history involved in much obscurity. Our chief ancient authority upon this subject is the British historian Gildas, a monk who wrote about A. D. 550. His work is written in a very inflated, exaggerated style; but, after making due allowances for this circumstance, there seems no reason to doubt that the picture he draws of the gross corruption of morals, both among laity and clergy, that prevailed in the times of which he wrote, is in the main correct. The information he gives us of the religious belief and practice of the Britons of his day, is valuable.

1st. He shows that the British Church was orthodox in the doctrines of the Trinity, and of the divine and human natures of our Lord Jesus Christ. He calls Christ "God over all things blessed for ever;" he speaks of Him as "coæval with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and of the same substance;" and as "the Saviour and Creator of the world." He also mentions the eternity of rewards and punishments as an article of belief.

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[1] Laws of Ine, 23, 24. 32.; Thorpe's Ancient Laws and Institutes of England, vol. i. pp. 119. 123.

[2] Kemble's Saxons in England, book i. chap. 1.

2ndly. Gildas testifies to the existence of bishops in the British Church, whom he represents as sitting in the seat of Peter, and having power to bind and to loose; he also speaks of presbyters and pastors and other ministers, by whom he probably means deacons; and he refers to the service appointed for their ordination, and the lessons of Scripture that were read therein. It appears, moreover, that the British Church of his day had societies of monks and women under religious vows; that their churches were dedicated in honour of the martyrs, and had several altars; and that the service was chanted in them.

It is a remarkable fact that in the epistle which contains the notice of these points, not less than three hundred passages are quoted from Holy Scripture, and from the apocryphal books of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. There is also apparently an allusion to one of the canons of the Council of Nice, which forbids clergymen having in their houses other women besides those who were nearly related to them.

Concerning the number of the bishops of the British Church in Wales, we have no certain information. All the Welsh sees existing at the present day, claim a foundation anterior to the Saxon times. There is an old document, called the Book of Llandaff, which mentions the proceedings of several provincial synods of Wales, and also corroborates in some degree Gildas's account of the morals of his countrymen. Mention also is made in another ancient authority, the annals of Wales, of Daniel, bishop of Bangor, who died A.D. 584; and also of David, who died A.D. 601. The latter appears to have been bishop of Caerleon upon Usk, which was the metropolitan see of Wales, and to have transferred the see to Menevia, afterwards called St. David's.[1]

At Bangor Iscoed, in Flintshire, there was a celebrated monastery, which according to Bede contained in the 7th century some hundreds of monks. From North Wales, in the 5th century, proceeded a missionary of the name of Ninias, who, according to the same historian, had been regularly instructed at Rome in the faith and mysteries of the truth, by whose preaching the southern Picts were converted to Christianity. He built a church of white stone, an unusual thing at that time among the Britons, at a place called Whitherne, in Galloway, of which he was bishop. He also wrote a commentary on the Psalms. Another writer of the same century, who has been supposed by some to have been a British bishop, was Fastidius, the author of a treatise on the Christian life, which, on account of the piety and sound doctrine which it displays, is suited to all times.[2]

What degree of piety or learning may have existed in the British Church, either in Wales or elsewhere, during the 5th and 6th centuries, it seems impossible now to pronounce with any degree of certainty, from the want of historical records connected with this period. It is admitted, however, that no attempt was made by the Britons to propagate the Christian faith among the heathen Saxons. Possibly no opening ever offered itself for the commencement of such a work; but, at all events, the omission afforded a sufficient justification to Pope Gregory for attempting a task which seemed more properly to belong to the adjoining Christian Churches. One of these Churches, the Irish, did in fact, in the 6th century, send forth some eminent missionaries, by whom the gospel was conveyed to the Scots (who were an Irish tribe), as well as to other countries; and from Scotland somewhat later proceeded, as we shall see, a school of evangelists, who laboured with great success in parts of England. The Irish Church although, according to some, originally founded by missionaries from Britain, seems to have been, for a considerable period, more eminent, both for the piety and learning of its teachers, than the British Church. It agreed with the last-named Church in one particular, to which afterwards some importance was attached, — the time of observing Easter, in which point both Churches differed from that of Rome. The Irish Church, by means of the missionaries from Scotland, exercised also for awhile, as will appear, an important influence upon the affairs of the sister Church in Britain. When we consider these circumstances, and also the close connection which has always subsisted between Ireland and England from the earliest times, it seems not out of place to conclude this chapter with a short notice of three of the most eminent Irish teachers of the 5th and 6th centuries, Patrick, Columba, and Columbanus. As, however, few of the records of Irish ecclesiastical history can pretend to any great antiquity, no great confidence can be placed in some of the accounts of these worthies that have come down to us.

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[1] Lappenberg, vol. i. p. 133.; Bingham, lib. ix. cap. 6. Stillingfleet's Origines Britannicæ, p. 208.

[2] See extracts from it in Churton's Early English Church, pp. 25—27.

With respect to Patrick, there is very little to be said that can be affirmed with any certainty. We are told by Prosper, a writer of the 5th century, that the attention of Pope Celestine being drawn to the state of the Irish Christians, he sent, A.D. 431, to the Scots[1] believing in Christ, Palladius the deacon to be their first or chief bishop. The labours of Palladius being unattended with success, he retired into Scotland, where he died. He was succeeded in his mission by Patrick, who was a native of Scotland, born of Christian parents (his father having been a deacon, and his grandfather a priest), but whose early life had been passed in captivity in Ireland. Having had a dream, which suggested to him a call to the work of evangelising the Irish, he betook himself to France, for the purpose of study, by way of preparing himself for the office of a missionary. He is said to have been ordained bishop in Britain in his forty-fifth year, and thence to have proceeded on his missionary voyage to Ireland. According to the opinion of Roman Catholic writers, he was consecrated bishop by the Pope Sixtus III., and received his commission from him. This notion, however, seems inconsistent with the disagreement which we afterwards find existing between the Church of Ireland and that of Rome upon certain ecclesiastical usages[1]: and it seems unaccountable that, if Patrick had really been sent from Rome, this circumstance should not have been mentioned by Bede, who had access to the Roman archives for the composition of his ecclesiastical history, and who, while he records the mission of Palladius, makes no mention of that of Patrick. However this question may be determined, Patrick is undoubtedly entitled to be called the Apostle of the Irish nation, whose conversion has, notwithstanding the supposed existence of Christianity in Ireland previously, been with justice attributed chiefly to his labours and those of his successors.

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[1] The inhabitants of Ireland were anciently called Scoti, or Scots.

Columba was a native of Ireland; and we are told by Bede that he passed over into Britain A.D. 565, to preach the word of God to the provinces of the northern Picts, the southern Picts having been long before converted by Ninias. He had previously founded in Ireland a noble monastery at a place known by the name of the Field of Oaks, now called Derry. Having laboured successfully for the conversion of the Picts, he received from them the island of Iona, or Hii, since called from him I-columkill, the island of Columb of the Churches. Here he built a monastery, from which so many missionaries afterwards proceeded to preach the gospel in England and elsewhere, and here he was buried thirty-two years after his arrival in Britain. He was a priest and monk, but never appears to have been raised to the episcopal office. One of Columba's favourite occupations seems to have been that of transcribing copies of the gospels, and other parts of Holy Scripture; and his biographer Adamnan reports, that he was overtaken by death while engaged in copying the 34th Psalm. He is also said to have composed some Latin and Irish hymns, many of which are still extant.

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[1] Neander's Church History (Bohn's edition), vol. iii. pp. 172—178. He considers Patrick to have been the founder of the Irish Church; see also, Dr. Wordsworth's Sermons on the History of the Irish Church, pp 30—44.

Columbanus was an Irish monk of the 6th century, of the monastery of Bangor, in the county of Down. From that place he migrated to France, where he founded two monasteries at Luxeuil and Fontaine, in the forest of the Vosges mountains. He appears to have been strongly attached to the customs of his own country; and, particularly, to have maintained stoutly the Irish practice with respect to the keeping of Easter. On this subject he addressed a letter to Pope Gregory the Great, in which he contended for freedom in a spirit of love, and entreated the Pope to judge for himself, without being fettered by the opinions of his predecessors. In a similar spirit he wrote to a French synod assembled to consider this subject, exhorting them to mutual love and the unity of the Spirit, notwithstanding difference of manners and customs. Columbanus was the author of a rule of monastic life, which was much celebrated. It was simpler and shorter, and in some respects more severe, than that of Benedict, which was generally received, as we shall see hereafter, through the monasteries of the west of Europe. In this, however, Columbanus, though undoubtedly a good and holy man, fell into great error. In wishing to inculcate self denial upon his monks, through the annihilation of their own will, he taught them to place a servile dependence on the will of another human being, their superior, who was represented to them as the absolute instrument of the Lord, for their guidance. This was to teach them that, so far as they acted in obedience to orders, they were free from moral responsibility. The doctrine of Columbanus, "that man should ever be dependent on the mouth of another," seems altogether at variance with Christianity, which teaches us to depend "on that which proceedeth out of the mouth of God," and which says expressly, "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men."[1] This doctrine, as developed by the monks of after times, has been the source of much "voluntary humility" and slavishness of mind, but probably of little real holiness.

In the year 610 Columbanus's faithfulness in reproving vice, subjected him to persecution from the court of Theodoric, king of Burgundy. Being driven from France, he settled for awhile in Switzerland with his pupil Gallus, another faithful Irish missionary, the memory of whose labours in that country is preserved to this day by the name of the canton of St. Gall. After labouring for some years for the conversion of the Suevi and Alemanni, he passed over into Italy, and founded the monastery of Bobbio, in the Apennines, where he died.[2]

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[1] Matt. iv. 4.; 1 Cor. vii. 23.

[2] Neander's Light in Dark Places, p. 194.; Lappenberg, vol. i. p. 183.

CHAP. II.

RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE PAPAL SUPREMACY DURING THE PERIOD BEFORE THE MISSION OF AUGUSTINE.

The scanty notices of the history of the British Church, during the 4th and 5th centuries, that have come down to us, seem at least to prove that it formed an integral part of the universal Church, agreeing in doctrine and discipline with other Christian Churches. The advocates of the supremacy of the bishop of Rome over the whole Church of Christ would infer from this, that his supremacy was also acknowledged by the ancient British Christians. An inquiry into the relation in which the see of Rome stood to the rest of the Christian Church, during the first four centuries, will lead to a very different conclusion. If it can be shown that, during the earlier part of that period, the notion of a supremacy of authority in the bishops of Rome had apparently no existence; and that such a thing, when asserted, was successfully resisted by Churches whose orthodoxy none have ever dared to impeach; if all that can be fairly claimed for the Church of Rome in those ages was a primacy of rank due to the imperial city, or at the farthest a patriarchal authority over part of the Western Church, —then the circumstance of the British Church being an integral part of the universal Church, instead of proving its dependence on Rome, proves directly the contrary. It is idle to allege the concurrence of the British bishops, in framing the canons of the Council of Sardica, as a proof of the consent of the British Church to the doctrines that were a century later engrafted on those canons. The doctrine of the Papal supremacy, as involving a divine right to govern the Church, was (as we shall presently show) a notion of the 5th century. It is admitted that there is no evidence to connect that doctrine with the British Church, before the mission of Germanus. Supposing him to have gone to Britain as Papal vicar, we have still no evidence that he was received in that capacity. The treatment which Augustine afterwards met with from the British bishops, would lead rather to the contrary inference.

As it is of the utmost importance that we should understand clearly the real position of the Church of ancient Britain with respect to this vital question, it seems desirable that, before we enter upon the history of the first acknowledged interference of the Pope with the affairs of England, by the mission of Augustine, we should consider what was the relation between the see of Rome and the rest of the Church of Christ, during the four or five centuries that preceded that event.

In order to arrive at a just conclusion on this point, there is no occasion to enter particularly into the testimony of Holy Scripture against the doctrine of the Papal supremacy, as derived from a supposed primacy of St. Peter among the apostles, said to have been conferred by our Lord Jesus Christ in these words: "Upon this Rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."[1] It is sufficient to say, that those words admit of a very easy explanation, without adopting the Roman hypothesis, and that that hypothesis is utterly irreconcilable with the Scripture history in the Acts of the Apostles. There is not a single act of St. Peter recorded in that book, which implies that he had a supreme authority over the other apostles; there are many things mentioned in it which are perfectly inconsistent with that supposition.

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[1] Matt. xvi. 18.

Then it is asserted, that this supposed authority passed to the bishops of Rome, as the successors of St. Peter. The question, however, from which of the apostles the succession of the bishops of Rome is to be traced, is by no means clear; among ancient authorities there is much more that connects the name of St. Paul with the foundation and settlement of the Church of Rome, than that of St. Peter. Irenæus says, that Peter and Paul having established the Church of Rome, committed it to Linus as its first bishop. Supposing this to be the true account of the matter, the bishops of Rome may, in one sense, be called the successors of St. Peter, though they might, with at least equal propriety, be termed the successors of St. Paul. Of the successors of Linus in the bishopric nothing remarkable, that bears on the matter under consideration, is recorded, until the year A.D. 158, when Anicetus held the see. At that period a difference existed between the Churches of Asia and the Churches of Western Europe, as to the day of the termination of the fast which introduced the festival of Easter, as also with respect to the day on which the anniversary of the Lord's resurrection should be kept. The Asiatic Christians kept what was called the Paschal Festival on the fourteenth day of the first month (the day on which the Jews ate their Paschal Lamb), and they ate a lamb on the same day in commemoration of Christ's death. The Western Christians had also a paschal feast, which they kept on the day before the anniversary of the Lord's resurrection; and they always kept this anniversary on a Sunday, without reference to the Jewish computation of time. The Asiatics, on the other hand, kept the anniversary of the Resurrection on the third day after their paschal feast, whether it were a Sunday or not.[1] Both parties pleaded apostolical authority for their respective customs; but, neither being willing to give way to the other, it seemed desirable that a conference should take place between an Asiatic bishop and the bishop of Rome (as the head of the Church of the imperial city), for the purpose of discussing the points in dispute. Polycarp, the aged bishop of Smyrna, who had been appointed to his office by St. John, went to Rome, and had a conference with Anicetus, the Roman bishop, on this subject. The meeting was conducted with perfect kindness and amity; but Irenæus, who relates it, says that neither was willing to concede to the other. As a proof of their mutual love and goodwill, they received the Holy Communion together; and the Roman bishop, instead of being offended at the independence of Polycarp, or claiming any kind of superiority over him, is expressly stated, as a mark of respect to his age and character, to have allowed him to consecrate the elements.[1]

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[1] Burton's Eccles. Hist. p. 380.

Passing over forty years, we find the same paschal controversy, as it was called, still agitated between the same Churches, although in a very different spirit. On this occasion, councils were held in different parts to consider the matter[1]; and the result showed that the majority of the Christian world were opposed to the custom alleged by the Churches of Asia Minor. The bishops of these Churches, however, met in council at Ephesus, and addressed a letter to Victor, then bishop of Rome, declaring their adhesion to their own custom. For this, Victor first endeavoured to persuade all the other Churches to cut off those of Asia Minor from their communion. Failing in this, he wrote letters in the name of his own Church, announcing that it would not hold communion with any of the Churches of Asia Minor. The result of this proceeding shows how ignorant the Christians of that day were of any supremacy in the bishop of Rome. Not only did the other Churches refuse to follow Victor's example; some of their bishops wrote to remonstrate, and even to rebuke him for his harsh and uncharitable conduct. In particular, Irenæus, bishop of Lyons in Gaul, addressed to the bishop of Rome a letter, which has been preserved by Eusebius the historian, and is a beautiful specimen of the pacific spirit of the writer, and corresponds (as Eusebius observes) well with the name which he bore.[1] Irenæus did not content himself with writing to Victor, but addressed the bishops of other Churches also. The result was, that peace was restored between all the dissentient parties; but the manner in which that event was brought about, as well as the circumstances that went before, shows beyond all question that at that time the Churches neither of the East nor of the West recognised any supreme authority in the bishop of Rome to control their affairs.

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[1] Irenæus ap. Euseb. lib. v. 24. The meaning of the passage has been disputed, but this seems the more probable sense. Burton's Eccles. Hist. p. 381., note.

Passing on to the 3rd century, we find Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, repeatedly asserting the independence of the African Church, of which he was the chief bishop. It is true that Cyprian, as appears from his writings, and especially from his treatise on the unity of the Church, was willing to acknowledge St. Peter as the representative among the Apostles of the unity of the Church. He speaks of the see of Rome as the chair of Peter, and considered that what Peter was among the Apostles, the chair at Rome was among other chairs. But he maintained that, though our Lord especially and in the first place commissioned Peter alone, and built the Church upon him, yet, according to John, xx. 23., he bestowed equal power on all the other Apostles. According to this theory, the bishop of Rome (supposing him to be the successor of St. Peter) would seem to be a sort of "primus inter pares" among other bishops, and, as the representative of the unity of the Church, would be bound to take the lead in all measures adopted for preserving that unity, and to watch over the maintenance of the orthodox faith. Supremacy, in the sense of any *superior*

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[1] 'Ειρηναῖος = 'ειρηνοποιὸς, peace-maker. Eusebius, lib. v. 24.

power or authority to control, he would have none. And Cyprian's conduct is the best commentary on his theory.

About A.D. 254 or 255, we find Faustinus, bishop of Lyons, complaining of the bishop of Arles as having embraced erroneous tenets. If the bishop of Rome had been the Supreme Judge of the Church, as modern Romanists would make him, this complaint ought to have been addressed to Stephen, then bishop of Rome, and to nobody else. Faustinus, however, wrote to Cyprian, as well as to Stephen, for advice. Cyprian then wrote to Stephen, urging him to take the lead in vindicating the unity of the Church; but he wrote to him not as a superior, but as an equal, calling him (as he had called his predecessor Cornelius on an occasion when he had asserted the independence of his own Church) his colleague. Again, about the same time, Basilides and Martialis, two Spanish bishops, were deposed for certain offences, and their successors were duly appointed. The deposed bishops went to Rome, and interested Stephen in their behalf; the Churches of the government of which they had been deprived, applied to Cyprian. Cyprian, without waiting for the concurrence of Stephen, who he said had been deceived by false statements, summoned a council of African bishops, and wrote in their name to the Spanish bishops to adhere to what they had done, without regarding the opinion of the bishop of Rome. Not long after these proceedings, another controversy arose about the validity of Baptism administered by the hands of heretics, in the course of which the same principle of independence of Rome was successfully asserted. On this occasion Stephen, who maintained the validity of these baptisms, threatened to hold no communion with the Churches of Asia, which supported the contrary doctrine. This proceeding on the part of Stephen drew forth a very strong opposition from Firmilian, bishop of Cappadocia, who was so far from deferring to the bishop of Rome in any way, that he treated him with the greatest rudeness. The question was soon brought before Cyprian, who referred the matter to a council then sitting at Carthage, which came to a decision opposed to that of the bishop of Rome, and asserted the necessity of rebaptizing those who had been baptized by heretics. The discussion of the question was afterwards renewed in another council at Carthage with the like result. Cyprian then wrote to Stephen to announce these decisions, and took occasion to assert the right of every bishop to make rules for his own Church, holding himself responsible to God alone. Stephen replied with great warmth and intemperance, and threatened to exclude the messengers of the African Council from communion. Cyprian, however, maintained his dignity as well as his opinion, and, with reference to one of Stephen's arguments, derived from alleged custom, observed, in a letter to Pompey, a brother bishop, most pointedly, that "custom without truth is antiquity of error." He afterwards convened another and a larger council of African bishops; and his address to them in opening the proceedings of the council, seems to leave no doubt as to what his opinion was upon the question of the right of the bishop of Rome to dictate to other Churches. "For none of us makes himself to be a bishop of bishops, or tries tyrannically to frighten his colleagues into the necessity of obeying, since every bishop, in virtue of his own liberty and power, is master of his own will, and is as incapable of being judged by another, as he is of judging him himself: but let us wait for the universal judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, who alone has the power of putting us over the government of His Church, and of judging us for our actions." This council unanimously confirmed the decision of the former synods, and thereby apparently set the seal to the declaration of the independence of the African Church.[1]

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[1] Burton's Eccles. Hist., pp. 547—554.

We see from this that Cyprian, while he acknowledged a precedence or primacy of rank in the bishop of Rome, denied him any authority to rule over other Churches.

A like spirit seems to have influenced the Fathers, who composed the great Council of Nice, called by Constantine, the first Christian emperor, A.D. 325. Although the bishop of Rome, on account of his advanced age, was not present at that council, it was declared by one of its canons (6th) that the ancient rights of the bishops of the principal cities of the empire — Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch — should remain as authorised by custom.[1] This seems to recognise a precedence of rank as due to these prelates, while at the same time encroachment on the rights of other Churches was prevented by defining the limits within which their patriarchal power, as it was called, should be exercised.

We now come to the Council of Sardica, which met, as before mentioned, A.D. 347. This council was called by the two Emperors Constantius and Constans, with the intention that it should be a general council; but they were disappointed of their wish. The Western bishops came there to the number of 170, but the Eastern bishops, including the supporters of Arianism, held a separate synod at Philippopolis. The Council of Sardica, besides determining many things in favour of the orthodox faith, made twenty-one canons, some of which gave an appellate jurisdiction to the bishop of Rome. The 3rd canon provided for the case where any bishop thought he had good reason to appeal from a provincial judgment, and to desire a new trial. Its words are, "If it please your Piety, let us honour the memory of the Apostle Peter;" and it proceeds to direct that the complainant should write to Julius, the bishop of Rome, and that the bishop of Rome, if he thought fit, should order the cause to be tried, and name judges to try it. Other canons of this council provided that if a deposed bishop gave notice of appeal to Rome, his place should not be filled up until the bishop of Rome had given sentence, and that when the bishop of Rome had received an appeal, he might order the case to be tried again by the provincial bishops, or send legates to try it.[1] These canons form the foundation of that part of the papal supremacy which consists in exercising an appellate jurisdiction over other Churches. It is evident from the very wording of the canons that this jurisdiction was something new in the Church. Had the council acknowledged a pre-existing divine right to govern the Church, bequeathed by St. Peter to his successors, they would hardly have expressed themselves in these words, "If it please your Piety, let us honour the memory of the Apostle Peter," which seem to imply a new honour then for the first time paid to that Apostle's memory. If it had been a divine institution, that the popes of Rome should in all ages be the fountains of jurisdiction to the Church, the canons of the Council of Sardica were superfluous, for they could obviously add no weight to a divine command, and they do not refer to any such authority. They only express the intention of the parties who framed them, who thought it a device likely to prove beneficial to the Church, to give the bishop of Rome this appellate jurisdiction, at a time when it must be acknowledged that the bishops of Rome showed a laudable zeal for the orthodox faith, as distinguished from the Arian prelates of the East, and as opposed to the persecuting zeal of an Arian emperor. It may be observed also that Julius, the Pope named in the canon, in a letter written to defend himself from the accusations of the Arians, claims no such divine right of supreme jurisdiction, but only a right of judging according to the canon of the Church.

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[1] Bingham's Antiquities, lib. ii. cap. xvii. § 7.

Moreover, these canons, not being enacted by a general council, cannot be regarded as in any sense binding upon the universal Church. It is obvious that a council, consisting only of Western bishops, could not by their sole authority impose a supreme and hitherto unknown court of appeal upon other Churches; and accordingly its canons never were acknowledged in the Eastern Churches. Neither, again, ought the canons in fairness to be construed to mean more than they literally express. They give authority to the bishop of Rome to receive appeals from such bishops as might wish to appeal from the decisions of provincial synods; they give no power to evoke causes to Rome, or to summon bishops there, or to review and set aside the judgments of councils. Still we shall find, as we proceed further, that notwithstanding what has just been alleged in proof of the insufficiency of these canons to establish any divine right of appellate jurisdiction over the whole Church as inherent in the bishops of Rome, the canons of Sardica were made the pretext for a considerable part of the usurpations, which finally resulted in the modern notion of the Papal prerogatives.

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[1] Hussey's Rise of the Papal Power, pp. 3, 4.

The canons of the second general council held at Constantinople, A. D. 381, in which Damasus the Pope professed to concur, are a strong testimony against the Papal supremacy. The council decreed that no bishop should invade the diocese of another, but that every episcopal province should have its own jurisdiction independent, according to the canons of the Council of Nice; and that the see of Constantinople should have rank next after that of Rome, because it was New Rome. This was as much as to negative the idea of any superiority of one Church over another, beyond a mere precedence of rank. Notwithstanding this, the popes went on for the next thirty years constantly making fresh encroachments, which they were not ashamed to support by gross fictions. In 381 Siricius, in opposition to the canons of Nice, decreed that the bishop of Rome might consecrate a bishop by himself alone, instead of the concurrence of three bishops being required.

In 402, Innocent I. affirmed, that all the Churches of Italy, France, Spain, Africa, Sicily, and all the islands near, must keep all that Rome kept, because they were all founded (as he pretended) by St. Peter or his successors. He asserted this principle by sending decrees to various Churches, and appointed a vicar apostolic in Illyria. Zosimus, in 409, made Arles the metropolitan see of the south of France, alleging as a reason, the fiction, that that Church had been founded by Trophimus the Ephesian, sent from Rome. He also declared that the popes inherited a divine authority equal to that of St. Peter, derived from the power which our Lord bestowed on him, so that none could question the Pope's decisions. In the time of this Pope a case of appeal arose from the African Church, the result of which shows that these pretensions were by no means tamely submitted to, but that the encroachments of the popes were resisted as usurpations in the 5th century, with the same spirit with which they had been met in the 3rd. Apiarius, a presbyter of Africa, being excommunicated and degraded by his own bishop, appealed to Zosimus, who restored him on the alleged ground of the canons of the Council of Nice. The sentence was disputed in two successive African councils, on the ground that no such authority was contained in the African copies of those canons. Apiarius was restored to his rank, but not to his Church: but when the Pope's legates, who attended the second of these councils, proposed to excommunicate or summon to Rome the bishop who had taken the proceedings against Apiarius, the council demurred to this, and proposed a reference to the copies of the canons of Nice at Rome, and also to the Greek versions of those decrees, to see whether the canons which they disputed were really those of Nice. They also sent their own messengers to the bishops of Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople, and obtained from them authentic copies of the Nicene canons, which they forwarded to the Pope. This was in the popedom of Boniface, who had succeeded Zosimus, and who was himself, A. D. 422, succeeded by Celestine. Apiarius, notwithstanding what had passed under the former popes, again appealed to Celestine, who ordered him to be restored. This occasioned the calling of a third council in Africa, before which some new charges were brought against Apiarius. Celestine's legates were present, and attempted to delay the proceedings against Apiarius, but without success, as he himself made a confession of his own misconduct. This council concluded with a letter to the Pope, in which they request that he will not in future receive persons excommunicated by their synods, which they observe is contrary to the canons of Nicæa. They protest against appeals to foreign tribunals; they deny the Pope's right to send legates to exercise jurisdiction in his name, which they say is not authorised by any canon of the Fathers, for that the pretended Nicene canons alleged in support of it were not in any of the authentic copies of the canons of Nicæa; and they request that the Pope will not send any agents or messengers to interfere with them in any business, for fear the Church should suffer through pride and ambition.[1]

Such was the protest of the African Church in the early part of the 5th century against the Papal supremacy. The proceedings of these popes show plainly a consciousness that their assumed right to hear appeals was an usurpation, for otherwise they would not have had recourse to the disgraceful expedient of quoting the canons of Sardica, as if they had been incorporated in the canons of Nice, or, at all events, of quoting as part and parcel of the last named canons what they must have known was not included in them.

The resistance in Africa, in this case of Apiarius, seems, however, to have been the last effort of expiring independence on the part of the Western Church. The conquests and settlements of the barbarous nations in Europe,

[1] Hussey, p. 47.

which in the latter part of the 5th century put an end to the western division of the Roman empire, tended materially to advance the power of the bishops of Rome. Sixtus III., A. D. 432, asserted a claim of exemption for the popes from all ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Leo I., who succeeded, A. D. 440., claimed a right to appoint a vicar apostolic in Illyria, because he was bound, as the successor of St. Peter, to take care of all Churches. Again he deprived the archbishop of Arles in Gaul of the rights of a metropolitan, and bestowed them on the bishop of Vienne; and this decree of his was confirmed, A. D. 445, by a law of the Emperor Valentinian III., which acknowledged the Pope's supremacy in these words: "We decree, by a perpetual sanction, that nothing shall be attempted against ancient custom by the bishops of Gaul or other provinces, without the authority of the venerable Pope of the Eternal city: but whatever the authority of the apostolic chair ordains, shall be law to them; so that if any bishop when summoned shall omit to come to the court of the Roman bishop, he shall be compelled to come by the governor of the province."[1]

The fourth general council, which met at Chalcedon in Bithynia, A. D. 451, on account of the errors of Eutyches, respecting the Incarnation of our blessed Lord, bore very strong testimony against the Papal pretensions. The 9th canon of that council, which provided that bishops or clergy should appeal from their metropolitan to the exarch of the province or patriarch, or to the bishop of Constantinople, was directly opposed to the appellate jurisdiction claimed by the Pope on the strength of the Sardican canons. Again, the 28th canon recognised the precedence of the chair of ancient Rome, not on the ground of its being the see of St. Peter, but because it was the royal city; and for the same reason confirmed the canon of the Council of Constantinople, which had given the second place to the see of Constantinople as being New Rome. These canons gave so much offence to Pope Leo, that he presumed to talk of annulling them by the authority of St. Peter. It was, however, a mere idle threat for the Pope to talk in this manner to Eastern Christians, inasmuch as the notion of any supremacy of authority in the bishop of Rome, whether derived from St. Peter or otherwise, was never, except in some few instances, acknowledged in the Eastern Church. Passing over the two next popes, Hilary and Simplicius (who appear to have continued the same course of encroachment), we come to Felix, who succeeded to the popedom, A.D. 483. He not only attempted to depose the bishops of Antioch and Alexandria, by virtue of the assumed authority of St. Peter, but having, on the strength of the Sardican canons, first summoned without effect Acacius, the patriarch of Constantinople, to take his trial at Rome, afterwards procured a sentence of deposition against him at a synod held in that city. In this case we find the appellate jurisdiction, given by the Sardican canons, turned into a coactive jurisdiction, and the right assumed (which was not given by those canons) of summoning persons to Rome for trial. No notice was taken by the patriarch of this sentence, nor was it regarded as valid, either by the Emperor or the Eastern Churches in general (most of which remained out of communion with Rome forty years), but the Pope was not a whit daunted. He wrote to the clergy and monks of the East, informing them of the sentence against Acacius, and requiring their concurrence. He also wrote to the Emperor Zeno, on the same subject, a letter, in which he declared that St. Peter spake in him his vicar, and that Christ spake in Peter; from which the transition was easy to the more modern doctrine, that the Pope is the Vicar of Christ.

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[1] Hussey, pp. 63, 64.

Gelasius, who succeeded, A.D. 492, went even beyond Felix in his assumptions. He declared that, according to the canons, Rome had authority to receive and try all cases of appeals made to her; that all could appeal to Rome, but none from Rome; that Rome had power to revoke any and every judgment given by any other authority in the Church; that Rome could judge the whole Church; but could not be judged by any one, for that all must obey her sentence; that none but Rome had supreme jurisdiction; that what Rome approved and confirmed had authority, but without that confirmation, nothing had authority; that not even the canons of a general council, such as that of Chalcedon, had authority, except so far as Rome sanctioned what was there decreed; and, finally, he asserted a general obligation on the whole Church to follow the order of Rome in everything. Gelasius also appears to have been the first to broach the notion (afterwards carried to such a dangerous excess) of the superiority of the ecclesiastical power over the temporal. A synod, held at Rome under him, A.D. 494, while professing to settle the canon of Scripture, declared also, in very strong terms, the supremacy of the Pope, as founded on the Lord's declaration to Peter. This synod gave the second place to the Church of Alexandria, on the ground that it was founded by Mark, the disciple of St. Peter, in the name of that Apostle, and the third place to the Church of Antioch, because St. Peter dwelt there before he went to Rome. The same synod declared what writings were to be received by the Church, and what were to be rejected, including in the former, besides the acts of the four first general councils, and the works of several Fathers, the Decretal Epistles of all the Popes, and sundry acts of martyrs and legends of saints. This was a full development of the principles now generally acknowledged in the Western Church, though rejected in the East.

The election of Symmachus, A.D. 498, was disputed, which gave occasion for the interference of the Gothic king of Italy, Theodoric, who referred the matter to a council; which, after many delays, finally gave judgment in Symmachus's favour, A.D. 501. In the course of the discussions that arose before this council, and some others which followed within a few years, a new doctrine was broached, which tended to the still greater exaltation of the popes, viz., that St. Peter had bequeathed all his merits to his successors, as well as his authority; and that if there was in any of them a lack of goodness acquired by his own merits, that which his predecessors bestowed was enough. This was, in short, an assertion that the Pope was impeccable, as well as infallible, by virtue of his office. It was alleged, in reply to the objection, that the Pope had on this occasion submitted to be tried by a council, that no judgment of a council could stand against a pope's authority, since he was the final court of appeal; and that God, who designed that the causes of other men should be tried by men, had reserved the judgment of St. Peter's successors to Himself without question. The same pope also had the boldness to issue a sentence of excommunication, with the concurrence of the Roman Senate, against Anastasius, the Emperor of Constantinople. This piece of audacity was, of course, not suffered to go unrebuked; but it shows the height of presumption to which the papal claims had attained, when we find the Pope comparing the honour of the Emperor with the honour due to himself, and ascribing a great superiority to his own office, because he had the care of divine things, while the Emperor had the care only of human things. This was as much as to say that the Pope was the spiritual sovereign of the world, as the Emperor was the temporal sovereign.

In the time of Symmachus, also, we find the first recorded instance of a grant of the pallium, the consecrated scarf, sent to metropolitans as a badge of authority derived from St. Peter.[1] In conformity with this view of the relation between the metropolitans of the West and the see of Rome, we find the bishop of Arles writing to Symmachus a request that he would declare what was to be kept, and the Pope in reply sending him an edict in the form of canons. Thus the Pope's word was made law in the Churches of the West by the acts of those Churches themselves.

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[1] "To show that you are a master and an archbishop, and that your Church shall be the metropolitan see of Pannonia." From a letter addressed to the archbishop of Lorch on the Danube. Hussey, p. 133.

The succeeding pope, Hormisdas, A.D. 517, was able to gain over some of the Eastern Churches to Rome ; the terms of communion which he proposed to them contained a promise to follow the Apostolic chair (*i. e.* the see of Rome) in all things. In his popedom, Rome and Constantinople were again in communion; but this peace did not last long. When Pope Vigilius, A.D. 553, refused to take part in the proceedings of the fifth general council of Constantinople, that council ordered his name to be erased from the public registers of the Church in which commemoration is made of departed bishops.[1] From this time to the final breach between the sees of Rome and Constantinople in the 9th century, which ended in the complete separation of the Eastern and Western Churches, the supremacy of the Pope was continually resisted throughout the eastern Empire.

From the middle of the 6th century to the popedom of Gregory the Great, A. D. 590, the power of the see of Rome seems not to have made any great advances. It is worthy of notice, however, that Gregory seems to have had a somewhat humbler notion of his office than some of his predecessors, inasmuch as he felt himself bound to remonstrate against a piece of assumption on the part of John the Patriarch of Constantinople, because, "in opposition to God and the peace of the Church, in contempt and to the injury of all the priesthood, he exceeded the bounds of modesty and of his own measure, and unlawfully took to himself in synod the proud and pestilent title of 'Ecumenic,' that is, Universal Bishop." [2]

The sum, then, of what has been stated above is as follows: —We have no historical evidence in the 2nd and 3rd centuries of any supremacy of authority in the bishop of Rome over other Churches. Wherever any attempts were made to exercise such authority they were successfully resisted. Even the writer[1], who was most inclined to acknowledge in Rome a centre of unity for the Church, himself set the example of such resistance. The great Council of Nice, while it allowed Rome a precedence of honour, seems by implication to have negatived the notion of a supremacy of power. The second and fourth general councils of Constantinople and Chalcedon, while they maintained the same honorary precedence for the ancient imperial city, still more strongly testified against that notion, by giving a precedence of the same kind, though next in place, to Constantinople, expressly founded on temporal, and not on spiritual, reasons; as also by the prohibition of the Council of Constantinople against one bishop's interfering with another diocese, and by the canon of Chalcedon, which directed appeals to be made from the metropolitan to the patriarch, without any mention of Rome.

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[1] Hussey, pp. 69—147.

[2] Greg. Epist. IX. 68.

The honorary precedence thus accorded to Rome may have involved, in the opinion of some, the duty of watching more especially over the preservation of the orthodox faith, but it gave no power of interference with Churches not in the patriarchate of Rome, and certainly no supreme appellate jurisdiction. The claim of such a jurisdiction was founded on the canons of a council[2] not ecumenic, *i. e.* not composed of bishops of the whole Church, expressed in dubious and hesitating language, the professed object of which was chiefly to give honour to the memory of St. Peter. The language of those canons, though not very comprehensive in its terms, and suggesting the idea of a voluntary arbitration rather than anything else, was cunningly, and, with the aid of falsehood and forgery, turned into an authority for a compulsory jurisdiction, and by degrees made an instrument for exalting the bishop of Rome to the proud station of Supreme Judge of

Cyprian.

[2] Sardica.

the Church. We have seen how a claim of jurisdiction, though resisted with such success in one country[1], as at least to afford a strong testimony to after times against the catholicity of this notion of supremacy, was again and again asserted by the popes of the 5th century, ever advancing, never going back, in season and out of season, in spite of councils and patriarchs and emperors.

During the whole of that period another assumption was put forth, and asserted with the same pertinacity and with constantly increasing boldness, concerning the supposed divine right of governing the Church inherited by the popes from St. Peter, in virtue of our Lord's promise to that Apostle. The change of the seat of empire from Rome to Ravenna, which took place early in the 5th century, enabled the popes to act with greater boldness when removed from the immediate presence of imperial power. The feeble reigns of the last unworthy successors of Augustus, as well as the ignorance and barbarism of their Gothic conquerors, tended equally to the same point,—the exaltation of the spiritual power in the person of the Roman Pontiff. According to the ecclesiastical division of the empire, which was adopted after the conversion of Constantine, the bishop of Rome presided, as exarch or primate, over what was called the Roman Vicariate, comprehending South Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. As none of the provinces forming this division had any metropolitan, the Pope exercised lawfully the metropolitical functions therein, by consecrating bishops and holding synods.[2] To this authority was added the name and dignity of Patriarch, which was not enjoyed by any other see in the Western Church. Can we wonder that in an age of much ignorance, credulity, and superstition, when the imperial government was in a helpless state of imbecility, and the fairest countries of the West of Europe were inundated by fierce and hardly Christianised barbarians, Rome, the centre of learning and civilisation to the West of Europe, should be regarded also as the centre of religious unity and the source of spiritual power? Can we wonder that the name of the reputed successor of St. Peter, dignified as it was in some cases by the possession of great personal merits and virtues, by degrees acquired a marvellous and almost magical influence?—an influence which, before the age of the first Gregory, was almost universally recognised throughout the West of Europe, and which was destined after his time to receive continually fresh increase, till it rose to its height in the 11th century to be a spiritual monarchy wielded by a Gregory VII.

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[1] Africa.

[2] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 226.

CHAPTER III.

MISSION OF AUGUSTINE AND CONVERSION OF KENT.

We have before had occasion to remark upon the omission of the Britons to preach the faith of Christ to the Saxons or English who dwelt amongst them. Good reason have we to join the pious historian, who records that omission, in praising the goodness of God in providing more worthy preachers of the gospel for the English nation.[1] Gregory I., surnamed the Great, that remarkable man, who was the instrument in the hands of Providence for effecting this great change, while yet a private monk at Rome, had (we are told) seen some boys exposed for sale in the slave-market, whose beauty struck his eye; on inquiry, he was informed that they were of the nation of the Angles, whose country was still lying in the darkness of heathenism. The zeal of Gregory was kindled at the recital, and he immediately urged Benedict I., who then occupied the Papal chair, to send missionaries into Britain, and offered his own services for so excellent a work. The Pope listened favourably to his request, but the citizens of Rome, among whom he was very popular, were unwilling to let him go. The project was in consequence deferred until his own elevation to the Papal See, which followed not long afterwards, A.D. 590, and the execution of it was entrusted to other hands. Of the earnest piety and devoted self-denial of Gregory's character, his previous history gives ample proofs by his renunciation of wealth and power for the seclusion of a monastic life: and though we may lament the excess of superstition which deformed that character, we must not expect to find even the best of men altogether superior to the faults of the age to which they belong.

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[1] Bede, Eccles. Hist. lib. i. cap. 22.

Gregory's project seems originally to have been, to buy up some English youths for education as missionaries to their own country, and instructions to that effect were given to a priest named Candidus. The zeal of the Pontiff could not wait for the slow development of a plan which required years for its preparation. He succeeded in stirring up a band of monks, at the head of whom was Augustine, prior of a monastery at Rome, to set forth on the distant and perilous enterprise of preaching the gospel to the heathen conquerors of England. The missionaries, on arriving in Gaul, were disheartened at the thought of proceeding farther to a barbarous, fierce, and unbelieving nation, to whose very language they were strangers. They, therefore, sent back Augustine to Rome, to entreat the Pope to excuse them from so dangerous a journey. Gregory, however, who was of the mind, that it was better not to begin a good work than to think of desisting from it when begun, sent Augustine back with earnest exhortations to proceed in reliance on the assistance of the Almighty. He also wrote to the bishop of Arles, and also to the king and queen of the Franks, exhorting them to give every possible encouragement and assistance in forwarding the work. Augustine and his company being thus strengthened for their undertaking, and having obtained interpreters from the Franks[1], persevered, and landed in the island of Thanet in Kent, probably in the autumn of 596. England at that time "presented the extraordinary spectacle of at least eight independent kingdoms of greater or less power and influence, and, as we may reasonably believe, very various degrees of civil and moral cultivation."[1] Three of these kingdoms, Kent, Essex, and Sussex, were at that time united under the supremacy of one sovereign, Ethelbert, called by some writers the "Bretwalda," whose political influence extended as far as the southern bank of the Humber. The kingdom of Wessex, or the West Saxons, extended westward from Sussex to Devonshire, comprehending all the country stretching northward as far as the river Thames, and westward as far as the Severn. East Anglia occupied the extreme east of the island, stretching northward from the borders of Essex as far as the Wash. The northern part of England and the southern part of Scotland formed two smaller kingdoms, Deira and Bernicia, which were sometimes united in one under the name of Northumbria. North of these were the countries of the Picts and Scots, which last-named tribe also occupied Ireland. The remainder of England, east of the Severn and south of the Humber, formed the kingdom of Mercia. In Cornwall and Devonshire, North and South Wales, Cheshire, Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland, the ancient Britons, who had escaped the Saxon yoke, still maintained their independence. The dominions of Ethelbert, in which Augustine landed, offered a more promising field for the work of the Christian missionary than those of any of his compeers, on account of his having married a Christian princess, Bertha, daughter of the King of the Franks. On the occasion of this marriage, it had been stipulated by Bertha's parents that she should be permitted the free exercise of her religion in her new country, and accordingly she was accompanied thither by Luidhard, bishop of Senlis, as her chaplain; and a ruined British church in Canterbury was restored and fitted up for her use several years before the arrival of Augustine. The existence of a Christian congregation in the court of the Kentish monarch may very probably have in some degree prepared the way for the success of Christianity. Although we have no certain evidence of converts having been made by Luidhard, it appears from some of Gregory's letters, written before the mission of Augustine, that a desire for Christianity had begun to be felt in England. How far this was shared by Ethelbert himself we are not informed. On the reception of a message from Augustine, declaring the arrival of the missionaries, and that they were come to announce that which assured to all who took advantage of it everlasting joys in heaven, Ethelbert returned a courteous but politic answer, ordering them to stay where they were, and promising that they should be supplied with all necessaries, till he had considered what he should do with them. Some days afterwards the king paid a visit to the Isle of Thanet, and sitting in the open air (by way of precaution against magical arts), he ordered the missionaries to be brought into his presence. They came with an imposing procession, having a silver cross, and a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ painted on a board borne before them, singing a solemn litany, and offering up prayers for the salvation of themselves and of those to whom they were sent. When they had proclaimed the message of salvation which they brought, the king answered as before, kindly, but with a degree of caution that was at least natural, if not suggested by motives of policy.[1] "Your words and promises are very fair, but as they are new to us, and of uncertain import, I cannot approve of them so far as to forsake that which I have so long followed with the whole English nation." He added to this promises of protection, entertainment, and support, and a permission freely to preach and gain what converts they could to their religion. Augustine and his companions were also allowed the use of the church of St. Martin at Canterbury (in which the Queen

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[1] Bede, lib. i. cap. 25. The Franks and Saxons being alike German nations, of the same familv, had originally a common language.

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[1] Kemble's Saxons in England, vol. ii. pp. 2, 3.

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[1] Bede, lib. i. cap. 25.

Bertha was in the habit of performing her devotions) for the purposes of celebrating the rites of their religion and preaching the gospel. In their new residence, according to Bede's account, they gave such evidences of faithful earnestness and piety by their fervent prayers, rigid self-denial, diligent preaching of the word, and unspotted innocence of life, that before long numbers were induced to believe; and Ethelbert himself very soon openly professed to be a convert to the faith.[1] We learn from a letter of Gregory's, that on the first Christmas Day after Augustine's arrival, more than 10,000 Anglo-Saxons were admitted into the Church by baptism.

The example of the king naturally induced others to listen with favour to the preachers of the new faith: it does not, however, appear that he made use of any coercive measures to increase the number of converts. On the contrary, we are told by the historian, that he had learned from his instructors and leaders to salvation, that the service of Christians ought to be voluntary, not by compulsion.

The laws, however, of Ethelbert, enacted (according to the constitution of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms) with the advice and consent of the witan or wise men, distinctly recognise rights to Church property, as well as the inviolability of a church as a place of refuge, and afford protection to the different orders of the Christian clergy in respect of those rights. Although, therefore, we have no evidence of the introduction of Christianity being expressly sanctioned by the Kentish legislature, these laws amount to something very like such a recognition, and afford, perhaps, the earliest instance of the connection between Church and State in England.[2]

The mission having so far proved completely successful, it became evident that Augustine could not, in conformity with the principles of the Universal Church, proceed any farther in his missionary work without obtaining episcopal ordination. He appears, accordingly, to have gone over to France in the course of the year 597, and to have been there consecrated by the archbishop of Arles as bishop of the English nation. This title left him free to establish his episcopal see in any place which might afterwards appear most suitable for the purpose. Before returning to Britain, he despatched Laurentius, a priest, and Peter, a monk, to Rome, to inform Gregory of his success, and to obtain the Pontiff's answers to certain questions propounded by Augustine, with reference to the government of his new diocese. It appears, also, that the messengers brought tidings of miracles wrought by Augustine in the prosecution of his mission.

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[1] Bede, lib. i. p. 26.

[2] Kemble, vol. ii. pp. 204, 205.; King Ethelbert's "Dooms Ecclesiastical" in Johnson's Collection of Canons, vol. i. p. 84.; Thorpe's Ancient Laws and Institutes, vol. i. p. 3.

As this is the first instance in which we have to mention the subject of miracles, — a subject which occupies a very prominent place in the historical records of the times with which we have to do, —it seems a proper occasion for making some general observations with respect to the degree of credit to be given to these miraculous stories, more especially as we live in times in which the pretence of working miracles is put forth with more confidence than ever by the Church of Rome.

To a person who receives with implicit faith the statements of Holy Scripture, it may be difficult to fix a precise period for the cessation of miracles in the Church. The actual cessation was imperceptible, although we cannot doubt that it has taken place.[1] At the same time it seems unnecessary, as well as unphilosophical, to deny the possibility of cases arising since (especially on the first conversion of a heathen country to Christianity) in which the Almighty may think fit to suspend, for a particular purpose, the ordinary laws of nature. Still there must be some limits to this concession. If we receive without question every case of alleged miracle with which we meet in history, or even any large proportion of such cases, then what is called a miracle ceases to be miraculous. In every instance, the nature of the fact stated, the question whether it can be explained by natural causes, the evidence on which it rests, the degree of credit due to the narrator, and all those circumstances which philosophical criticism suggests as indicative of falsehood or truth, must be carefully weighed in the balance, before we admit a doctrine so open to the gravest objection as the continual working of outward miracles or signs of wonder in the Christian Church.

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[1] See Burton's Eccles. Hist. pp. 460—462.

The problem whether a fact that appears on the face of it miraculous is so or not, is not always very easy to solve. Nearly a century ago, some astonishing effects were ascribed to the preaching of Whitfield and Wesley, which some, who were eye-witnesses, regarded as miraculous. These wonders have since been probably accounted for by a more sceptical generation on purely natural and moral causes. There seems no reason why we should not apply a similar test to the miracles of modern ecclesiastical history. In this respect an example is set for our imitation by the distinguished Romanist historian, Dr. Lingard, himself an apologist for the miracles of Augustine and others. He admits that our ancestors, being persuaded of the continuance of miracles among them, would take but little pains to investigate the physical or moral causes of the event which excited their wonder or gratitude.—"The more religious among them kept God and His works constantly before their eyes: physical causes did His bidding; the wills of men were guided or controlled by Him; they beheld Him in every occurrence of life, and placed themselves with submission, but with confidence, under the protection of their heavenly

Father, by whom all the hairs of their head were numbered, and without whom, not even a sparrow could fall to the ground. Hence was generated a predisposition to invest every unexpected or wished for event with a supernatural character, to see in it the evident handiwork of the Almighty. A dream often would be taken for a vision or a warning from heaven; a conjecture, afterwards verified by the event, be converted into a prophecy; an occurrence in conformity with the object of their prayer, be pronounced a special interposition of the Divine power; and narratives of distant and surprising cures be admitted without inquiry, and on the mere testimony of the relators. It cannot be denied that this remark will apply to many of the facts recorded as miracles in our ancient writers. Their previous disposition of mind has led them into error: it was, however, an error of the head, not of the heart; one which might argue a want of science and discernment, but not of religion and piety."[1] To these causes of readiness to believe in the marvellous, the same writer adds another, arising from the habit that prevailed in the times before the revival of learning, of repeating and committing to writing legendary tales, which, in the general dearth of real knowledge, were eagerly swallowed as truth, without any attempt to ascertain their worth. He also particularly remarks on the caution of Bede, who never tells a marvellous story as of his own knowledge, although he gives credit to such stories sometimes on the authority of others. The reasons given by Dr. Lingard seem almost sufficient of themselves for rejecting the whole mass of miracles of the middle ages. But we must add, that a miracle, to command our faith on the same grounds as a New Testament miracle, must not only rest on unquestionable external evidence; it must be worthy of Him from whom it is supposed to proceed. There must be a sufficient cause for the suspension of the ordinary laws of nature; and, moreover, the work must be not a mere display of power capriciously put forth; it must have a high moral end. Therefore, if it involves something which the conscience of man protests against as untrue,—if it be wrought in support of that which the same conscience regards with horror as corrupt and erroneous,—it cannot be a miracle of God. It may be a lying wonder, but it is what we are bound by all that is most sacred to reject with abhorrence.[1]

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[1] Lingard's Anglo-Saxon Church, vol. ii. pp. 101, 102.

When we come to look more particularly at the miracles ascribed to Augustine, we find nothing very definite stated by Bede which may be subjected to criticism, except the story of the blind man restored to sight at Augustine's prayer, on the occasion of the first conference with the British bishops. Dr. Lingard himself admits that the particulars, with which that conference is said to have been attended, deserve but little credit[2]; and a Protestant writer will feel no hesitation in rejecting at once a miracle which is open to the suspicion of being wrought in support of a falsehood, such as the Papal supremacy, which was involved in the question of the British bishops submitting to Augustine. As to the miracles which were reported to Gregory, we must recollect that we are dealing with the fact of a body of cultivated Italians (earnest-minded and zealous men, no doubt) preaching the faith to a peculiarly rude and savage set of barbarians. Their superior knowledge of natural things may have brought about many effects which, in the eyes of such a people, seemed miraculous. The influence of mind upon mind often has effects which are most wonderful; how much more might this be the case where the teacher's mind was illuminated by some sparks of divine knowledge, and animated by the full confidence of faith and love, so as to work moral miracles, which the enthusiasm of those who beheld them might easily represent as something parallel to the results of the preaching of the Apostles! It is remarkable that Gregory, though credulous about miraculous stories, had a most clear and beautiful conception of the comparative worthlessness of miracles, merely regarded as outward signs of power, in comparison with the work of God in the minds of men redeemed and sanctified by Him, the work of the bringing forth of the new creature.[1] He seemed to feel what in an age, which would try to bring us back to outward miracles, we all require to realize more especially to ourselves, viz. that the spiritual miracles which are continually being worked amongst us through the ministers of Christ and the ordinances of His grace, in the turning of sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, are wonders of a far higher order than those other works, inasmuch as they affect not the body but the soul. For ourselves, indeed, the necessity of such signs has obviously ceased. We need not the gifts of healing, when the knowledge of medicine is so widely diffused as to be everywhere available for the work of Christian charity. We need not the gift of tongues, when the presence of a bishop speaking their own language is to the tribes of aborigines, in such countries as New Zealand, a greater sign than the word of one who understood all mysteries and all knowledge. The case of Gregory, however, living in times of general darkness and ignorance, was different from our own. He might perhaps be excused for showing some credulity on the subject of the signs said to follow the preaching of his pupil Augustine; and certainly he deserves praise for the sober caution with which he warned him not to be unduly exalted on account of the marvellous effects, produced by such weak instruments, but to remember the saying of the Lord Jesus to the seventy disciples, "In this rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."[1]

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[1] See Trench on the Miracles, pp. 47, 48.

[2] Lingard, vol. i. p. 68., note.

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[1] Neander's Light in Dark Places; Life of Gregory the Great, p. 135.

Augustine received from Gregory very full answers to all his questions. The first of these related to the behaviour of bishops to their clergy, and also to the number of portions into which the oblations of the faithful at the altar were to be divided. Gregory's answer refers him in general to the instructions contained in St. Paul's first Epistle to Timothy; and with respect to the apportionment of the oblations, he states it to be the usual practice of the Church of Rome to prescribe a fourfold division; viz. one part to be allotted to the bishop and his family for the duties of hospitality, another to the clergy, a third to the poor, and a fourth for the repair of churches. As Augustine was under monastic rules, he reminds him that he was bound not to live apart from his clergy, but after the manner of the primitive Christians, who had all things common. The inferior ministers of the Church (clerks not received into holy orders, as they were called) were to be allowed to marry and live on their portions at residences of their own, due care and provision being made for their being kept under ecclesiastical rules and in habits of sobriety and godliness. Augustine's next question related to the difference between the Gallic and Roman Liturgies, and was probably suggested by the circumstance of his having found the former in use in the church of St. Martin, under the ministry of Luidhard, the Queen's chaplain. Gregory's answer allowed him to choose from every Church whatever tended to promote piety and true religion, so as to form a body of services suitable for the use of the newly converted English nation, to which their minds were to be accustomed. The third question — what punishment was to be inflicted for theft from the Church — was answered by a direction that the punishment should be proportioned to the rank and means of the offender, a fine being demanded from those who could pay it, and stripes being inflicted on meaner culprits: provision was to be made for restitution to the Church of the things stolen, and care taken that punishment should be inflicted for the sake of charity and not from passion. The fourth question — whether two brothers might marry two sisters — was answered in the affirmative, as not being contrary to holy writ. The fifth question — as to the degrees of consanguinity within which persons might marry — was answered by a strict prohibition for the future of marriage of persons within the degree of cousins german. At the same time, Gregory does not take upon himself to separate those who were already married within the prohibited degrees before their conversion to Christianity, or to prohibit them from the holy communion. In the answer to the sixth question, Gregory allows Augustine for the present to consecrate bishops by himself, with the provision that, when the English Church was furnished with more bishops near to one another, no consecration of a bishop should take place, except with the concurrence of three or four prelates in the work. In reply to the seventh question — as to the manner in which Augustine was to deal with the bishops of Gaul and Britain — Gregory answers, "we give you no authority over the bishops of Gaul, because the bishop of Arles received the pall in ancient times from my predecessor, and we are not to deprive him of the authority he has received." He adds indeed suggestions, that it would be proper for Augustine to concert with the bishop of Arles for the correction of discipline among the Gallican bishops, to stir up that prelate's zeal in case of his growing remiss, and also to try the effect of his own persuasions and example in provoking his brethren in Gaul to emulation in good works. "But," he concludes, "whatever is to be done by authority must be transacted with the aforesaid bishop of Arles, lest that should be omitted which the ancient institution of the Fathers has appointed.[1] But as for all the bishops of Britain, we commit them to your care, that the unlearned may be taught, the weak strengthened by persuasion, and the perverse corrected by authority." The remaining questions relate to matters into which it is unnecessary to enter.[2]

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[1] Luke, x. 20.

It was probably not long after this that Augustine was invested with the dignity of a metropolitan, by receiving from Gregory the pall or consecrated scarf. He was empowered to ordain twelve bishops as his own suffragans; and the metropolitan authority at his death was to devolve on the bishop of London, whose successors were to be chosen and consecrated by a provincial synod, and receive the pall from Rome. He was also to send a bishop to York, whom Gregory announced his intention of investing with the pall afterwards, purposing, in case the people of the North embraced Christianity, to give him authority over twelve suffragans. Augustine himself was to have precedence and even authority over the metropolitan of York during his lifetime, but after his death the two metropolitans were to rank according to priority of consecration. Such was the original scheme for the establishment of the Church in Saxon England. Subsequent events rendered it necessary to make Canterbury the southern metropolitan see instead of London. The execution of Gregory's projects with respect to the province of York was also of necessity deferred, and in fact that part of his scheme was never fully accomplished. Gregory also pretended to grant to Augustine authority over the bishops of Britain, with what success we shall presently see.

At the same time fresh missionaries were sent from Rome, the chief of whom were Mellitus, Justus, Paulinus, and Rufinianus, who brought with them things necessary for divine service, sacred vessels and vestments for the clergy, and ornaments for the churches. To these necessary gifts was added the inestimable present of some books, viz. a bible in two volumes, two psalters, two copies of the Gospels, some apocryphal lives of the Apostles, some lives of martyrs, and expositions of certain epistles and gospels. Of these books, which have been called "the first fruits of the books of the whole Church of England," it is said that none but the two gospels remain, one of which is preserved in the Bodleian library at Oxford, and the other in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Gregory along with these sent to Augustine another gift, which in those days of superstition was considered of equal or greater importance, viz. some supposed relics of apostles and martyrs. He also wrote strong and earnest exhortations to Ethelbert, to do his utmost for the propagation of the Christian faith, and gave some important directions through Mellitus to Augustine, with respect to the manner in which the customs and solemnities of idolatry might be turned to Christian uses among the converts. Thus, while the heathen idols themselves were to be destroyed, the temples of the idols having been first sprinkled with holy water, were to be converted into Christian churches, and altars were to be erected in them and relics deposited. He at the same time directed that instead of idolatrous feasts in honour of devils, the day of the dedication of a church, or the nativities of the martyrs, should be kept with religious feasting to the praise of God. Gregory hoped, it seems, that while some gratifications were outwardly permitted to the new converts, they might the more easily consent to the inward consolations of the grace of God; and this policy, if not carried to the length of any sanction of heathenish practices, was not unworthy of that great Apostle, "who was made all things to all men, that he might by all means save some."[1]

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[1] The ntrusion of one bishop into the diocese of another was forbidden both by the First Council of Constantinople and that of Ephesus.

[2] Bede, lib. i. cap. 27.

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[1] 1 Cor. ix. 22.

Augustine being now settled in the royal city of Canterbury, as his episcopal see, began to take measures for consolidating his spiritual conquests. He restored an old church, said to have been built in the time of the Romans, on the site of which the present cathedral of Canterbury stands, and having consecrated it anew, he established a residence for himself and his successors close to the church. He also built a monastery not far from the city, in which by his advice king Ethelbert erected and endowed another church in honour of St. Peter and St. Paul, which afterwards was used as a burial-place both for the archbishops of Canterbury and the kings of Kent.[1] This last edifice, however, was not consecrated till the time of Laurentius, the next archbishop. We have seen that Pope Gregory, acting upon what had been for some time the settled policy of the Roman pontiffs,—that they should on every occasion that presented itself assert a claim to jurisdiction over all other Churches,—had presumed to commit to Augustine's care the bishops of the ancient and independent Church of Britain. Augustine now proceeded, with the assistance of Ethelbert, to see what degree of submission, co-operation, or support he was likely to obtain from these bishops. For this purpose a conference was arranged between them at a place afterwards known by the name of Augustine's Oak, on the frontiers of the West Saxons, probably in Gloucestershire. Bede tells us that Augustine's object was to persuade the British bishops to co-operate with him in preaching the gospel to the heathen Saxons, and also to induce them to preserve the bond of catholic unity, by observing the same traditions.

The Britons, in common with the Irish Church (the missionaries of which adhered most rigidly to the custom of their country), kept Easter according to an old practice, derived from the first Christians of Jerusalem, who employed the

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[1] Bede, lib. i. cap. 33. On the site of this abbey the Missionary College of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, now stands.

Jewish cycle of eighty-four years, according to which the Jews used to settle the anniversary returns of their passover. It appears that the practice of the Churches of the East and West differed widely during the first three centuries upon this point, in consequence of the adoption of different cycles of years. The council of Nice attempted to bring about an uniformity in the time of keeping Easter, but without success. The Church of Alexandria after that time adopted a new cycle of nineteen years, but the Church of Rome still adhered to the old Jewish cycle of eighty-four years, until the 6th century, when it adopted a cycle of ninety-five years (or five Alexandrian cycles), which had been invented by Dionysius Exiguus. This last cycle was in the course of time adopted throughout the whole Christian Church, but not without long and protracted disputes on the subject.[1] At the time of Augustine's mission it was probably unknown among the Christians of Britain and Ireland. After a long discussion, the Britons refusing to give up their practice with respect to this point, Augustine proposed a reference to a miracle, for the purpose of deciding whether their tradition, or his, had the approbation of heaven. To this the Britons reluctantly assented: and it is said that a blind man of the English race was produced, whom they were unable to cure, but who had his sight restored immediately on the prayers of Augustine. Still the Britons declared that they could not give up their ancient customs without the leave of their own people, and proposed a second meeting, at which more of their number might be present.

At this second synod seven British bishops are said to have been present, together with other learned men, from their celebrated monastery of Bangor Iscoed in Flintshire. On their way they repaired to the cell of a certain hermit, to consult him whether they should, at the preaching of Augustine, forsake their traditions. The answer they received was,—"If he is a man of God, follow him." "How shall we know that?" said they. The hermit replied, "Our Lord saith, 'Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart;' if, therefore, Augustine is meek and lowly of heart, it is to be believed that he has taken upon him the yoke of Christ, and offers the same to you to take upon you. But if he is stern and haughty, it appears that he is not of God, nor are we to regard his words." On their pressing him further for a sign by which they might discern what Augustine's disposition was, he bade them observe, whether he rose up to them, when they came to the place of meeting, and judge of his humility accordingly. On their arrival at the appointed place, they found Augustine sitting in his chair, and as he did not rise up to them, their wrath was kindled, and they were very unwilling to hear what he had to say. He renewed the proposals made at the former meeting, but in terms which showed that he claimed a superiority over them. "You act (said he) in many particulars contrary to our custom, or rather the custom of the Universal Church, and yet, if you will comply with me in these three points, viz. to keep Easter at the due time; to administer baptism by which we are again born to God, according to the custom of the holy Roman Apostolic Church[1]; and jointly with us to preach the word of God to the English nation, we will readily tolerate all the other things you do, though contrary to our customs." They answered, that they would do none of these things, nor receive him as their archbishop; for they alleged among themselves, "If he would not now rise up to us, how much more will he contemn us, as of no worth, if we shall begin to be under his subjection?"[2] According to one version of this conference, which is to be found in an old Welsh MS. (the authenticity of which, however, has been questioned), the abbot of Bangor expressly declared in the name of the British Churches, that they owed the subjection of brotherly kindness and charity to the Church of God, and to the Pope of Rome, and to all Christians; but other obedience than that they did not know to be due to him who was called Pope; for they were under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Caerleon upon Usk, who was, under God, their spiritual overseer and director.[1] On the other hand, Romish writers maintain that the narrative of the conference, contained in Bede, shows no evidence of the rejection of the papal authority, or even that the subject was at all discussed. These three things, however, are clear from Bede's narrative;—1st. That Augustine did put himself forward on this occasion as the agent of the Roman Church, for he required the Britons to observe the Roman custom of baptism; 2ndly. That he did require their compliance or obedience[2] in the three points specified; 3rdly. That in their answer they refused to receive him as their archbishop. In other words, they refused to acknowledge as their metropolitan a person claiming their obedience in the name of the Roman Church. The reason they gave for their refusal is comparatively immaterial. It is trifling about mere words to say, that this did not amount to a denial of the right of the Pope to impose an archbishop upon them. If the Papal supremacy had been universally received in the British Church, these bishops would not have dared so to treat the Pope's accredited agent.

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[1] Bingham's Antiquities, lib. xx. cap. v. § 4.

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[1] This may refer to the triple immersion in the name of the Holy Trinity, which custom of baptism appears from Gregory's letters to have been in use at Rome at that time. Churton's Early English Church, p. 44.

[2] Bede, lib. ii. cap. 2.

Under these circumstances, the question, whether the answer attributed to the abbot of Bangor be genuine or not, is of less importance. Whatever may have been said on the occasion, nothing was done for the accomplishment of that part of Gregory's plan which proposed to bring the

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[1] Stillingfleet's Origines Britannicæ, pp. 370, 371.; Bingham, lib. ii. cap. xviii. § 2.; Lappenberg, vol. i. p. 135., note, appears to consider this document genuine.

[2] Si in his tribus obtemperare mihĩ vultis.

British bishops under the rule of a metropolitan sent from Rome. Augustine, disappointed at the issue of the conference, which was no doubt caused in a great measure by his own haughty and arrogant behaviour, is said to have broken up the meeting with a threat, couched in the shape of a prophecy, that in case they would not join in unity with their brethren, they should be warred upon by their enemies; and if they would not preach the way of life to the English nation, they should at their hands undergo the vengeance of death. Bede (who speaks very harshly of the Britons) considers that this prophecy was fulfilled some years after Augustine's death, by way of divine judgment against those whom he calls perfidious men, who despised the offer of eternal salvation. He reports that Ethelfrid, the heathen king of Northumbria, being about to engage in battle with the Britons at Chester, observed a number of monks of the monastery of Bangor, standing apart from the rest of the army opposed to him, and engaged in prayer. Ethelfrid being informed of the occasion of their coming, said, "If they cry to their God against us, in truth, though they do not bear arms, they fight against us, because they oppose us by their prayers. He thereupon ordered them to be attacked first, and slew some hundreds of them."

Notwithstanding Augustine's failure with respect to the British Church, the work of his mission continued to prosper in other quarters. In 604, in pursuance of the commission which empowered him to consecrate bishops by himself, he consecrated Mellitus to be bishop of the East Saxons, and Justus to the see of Rochester. The province of the East Saxons, or Essex, was at that time governed by Sabert, a nephew of Ethelbert, who, with his people, was converted to the faith by the preaching of Mellitus. The see of the East Saxon bishop was fixed in London, the metropolis of the province, in which King Ethelbert built the cathedral church of St. Paul. King Ethelbert also built a cathedral for Justus at Rochester, and bestowed on both these churches (as well as on that of Canterbury) many gifts, and endowed them with lands and possessions for the use of the bishops and clergy.

Augustine also consecrated Laurentius to be his successor in the see of Canterbury. Soon after he had taken these steps for continuing the episcopal succession in England he died, and was buried close to the still unfinished church of St. Peter and St. Paul near Canterbury. After the dedication of the church (which took place in 613), his remains were brought into the porch and interred there. The epitaph inscribed on his tomb recorded his mission by Pope Gregory, and the miracles by which he was said to have converted an idolatrous nation from heathenism. Whatever we may think of his supposed miraculous powers, or his moderation in dealing with the British Christians, his name is deserving of all honour as the leader of those who laid the foundation of the great work of the conversion of Saxon England to the faith of Christ. Laurentius, his successor, exerted himself not only in promoting the conversion of the heathen Saxons, but also in endeavouring to bring the Britons and Scots (*i. e.* the Irish) into conformity with the rest of the Church with respect to the time of observing Easter. In a letter addressed by him and his brother bishops to the bishops of Ireland, they treat the Irish in a very different spirit from that of Augustine. In this letter, however, a circumstance is mentioned which, while it affords an important testimony to the independence of the Irish Church, shows also to what lengths this dispute about Easter was carried; viz., that Dagan, an Irish bishop, refused to eat with the Roman missionaries, on account of this difference in their practice. They also addressed the British bishops in a similar strain, but in both cases their letters appear to have produced no effect. With the exception of this attempt to bring about an uniformity of practice in the matter of Easter, nothing particular is recorded in the history of the Church until the year 616, when Ethelbert, the first Anglo-Saxon king who embraced Christianity, died. His death was the commencement of a period of severe trial to the infant Church. His son Eadbald not only rejected Christianity, but was guilty of the heathenish offence of taking his father's wife; whereby he was the means of leading many others, who had in his father's lifetime conformed to Christianity from motives of policy, to abjure the faith. The confusion was increased by the death of Sabert, king of Essex, whose three sons succeeding him, openly professed idolatry. They demanded of the bishop Mellitus that he should give them part of the holy bread in the Eucharist, as he had given it to their father. The bishop told them that they must first submit to the ceremony of baptism. This proposal they scornfully rejected; and upon their repeating their request, he still firmly refused to comply; at which they were so much enraged, that they ended with driving him and his followers out of their kingdom. Upon this, Mellitus came to advise with Laurentius and Justus what was next to be done. They agreed unanimously that it was better to return into their own country, than to remain any longer among barbarians who had openly apostatized from the faith. Mellitus and Justus accordingly withdrew first to France, intending to await there the event of things. Laurentius, preparing to follow them, and to abandon the mission, is said to have been diverted from his project by a dream. Having ordered a bed to be made for him in the church of Canterbury, he spent part of the night in watching and prayer, and then fell asleep. The next morning he repaired to the king with his back lacerated and scarred with stripes, and made him astonished with the report that these wounds had been inflicted upon him during the night by the Apostle St. Peter, with many reproaches on account of his cowardice in deserting his charge. Whether this story is to be attributed to superstition or to artifice, it had the effect of exciting the superstitious fears of Eadbald. The result was that he abjured his idols, renounced his unlawful marriage, embraced the faith, and did his utmost to promote the cause of Christianity. He also sent messengers to Mellitus and Justus, with a full permission to them to return and govern their own churches. The latter returned to Rochester, but the citizens of London preferring to remain in idolatry refused to receive Mellitus back.

However, on the death of Laurentius, A. D. 619, Mellitus succeeded to the archiepiscopal see, which he held for five years. During his primacy nothing remarkable is recorded in the history of the Church. He was succeeded by Justus A. D. 624, who, having received the pall from Pope Boniface, consecrated Romanus as his own successor in the see of Rochester.

CHAP. IV.

CONVERSION OF NORTHUMBRIA AND THE OTHER KINGDOMS.

The primacy of Justus was distinguished by the conversion of the kingdom of Northumbria, through the preaching of Paulinus, another of the second band of missionaries who had been sent over by Gregory with Mellitus and Justus. Edwin, king of Northumbria, having made proposals of marriage to Ethelberga, otherwise called Tate, sister of Eadbald, king of Kent, was at first refused on the ground of his being a heathen, while the princess was a Christian. Edwin persevered in his suit notwithstanding this refusal, and offered, if he obtained her in marriage, to grant a free exercise of the Christian religion to her and to all whom she might bring with her into Northumbria, both men and women. He also held out hopes that, upon further examination, he might be induced himself to embrace the faith. Upon this promise of Edwin the marriage was suffered to take place; and Paulinus, having been first consecrated to the episcopal office by Justus, A. D. 625, was sent to accompany the Kentish princess, and to protect her religious principles from being corrupted in the midst of a heathen court. Paulinus having come into Northumbria, was wholly bent upon the conversion of the natives of the country, but for some time he laboured without any effect. The next year Edwin's life was attempted by an assassin sent to slay him by Cuichelm, king of the West Saxons. The poisoned dagger aimed at Edwin's heart was received in the bosom of a faithful retainer, who sacrificed his own life to preserve his sovereign. On the same night, which was that of Easter Day, the queen gave birth to a daughter, and Edwin gave thanks aloud, in the presence of Paulinus, to his gods for her safe delivery. Paulinus, also, on his part, returned thanks to Christ, who, as he declared to the king, had, in answer to his own prayers, preserved Ethelberga through the dangers of childbirth. Edwin was favourably impressed with the words of Paulinus, and promised that, if God would give him life and victory over his enemy the king of the West Saxons, he would cast off his idols and serve Christ; and, as a pledge of his sincerity, he delivered his daughter to Paulinus, to be devoted to Christ. The royal infant was baptized on the following Whitsunday with twelve others, the first-fruits of the kingdom of Northumbria. The king having returned victorious from his expedition against the West Saxons, though he no longer worshipped idols, was unwilling at once to commit himself by embracing the faith, but professed a desire to be instructed by Paulinus, and to confer with his wisest counsellors as to what course he should take. Letters, also, of exhortation and advice were sent about the same time to Edwin and his queen, with presents, by Pope Boniface, who seems to have felt a lively interest in the Anglo-Saxon mission. Still the king hesitated about taking the decisive step: at length Paulinus is said to have become acquainted with a secret, the knowledge of which Bede ascribes to revelation from on high, but which may very probably have been communicated to him by the queen; and this circumstance enabled the bishop to acquire such an influence over the king's mind as to induce him to do all that he desired. Without giving the details of the story at length, it is sufficient to say, that Edwin in his youth, at a critical moment of his life, when an exile from his country, and in the utmost peril, had been assured by a vision of his return home in safety and honour. This assurance had been accompanied by an intimation that the person who gave it was able also to give him better advice for his life and salvation than any of his kindred had ever heard of, if he would consent to submit to his direction and follow his counsel. Edwin, upon this, is said to have readily promised to follow the directions of one who would deliver him from calamity and raise him to a throne. The unknown monitor then laid his hand upon Edwin's head, saying, "When this sign shall be given you, remember this present discourse, and do not delay the performance of your promise," and immediately vanished out of sight. Paulinus, having become acquainted with this story, and choosing a favourable opportunity when the king was alone, deliberating what course he should take with reference to Christianity, came into his presence, and laying his hand upon his head, asked him, "Whether he knew that sign?" Edwin, astonished, was about to fall trembling at the bishop's feet, but he prevented him with these words, "Behold, by the help of God you have escaped the hands of the enemies whom you feared. Behold you have of His gift obtained the kingdom which you desired. Take heed not to delay that which you promised to perform; embrace the faith and keep the precepts of Him, who, delivering you from temporal adversity, has raised you to the honour of a temporal kingdom; and who, also, if you are obedient to His will, will make you partaker with Him of His eternal kingdom in heaven."[1]

Edwin now professed himself both willing and bound to receive the faith which Paulinus taught; but expressed a desire to confer with his chief friends and counsellors on the subject, that, if they thought alike with him, they might all together be cleansed in Christ the Fountain of Life. Paulinus assenting to this, a witena gemot, or assembly of the wise men or chiefs of the kingdom of Northumbria, was holden to consider this matter, and of this assembly a remarkable account is given by Bede. Mr. Kemble supposes that Edwin, having determined to embrace Christianity, but being unwilling to do so alone, took good care to sound the most influential of his nobles before he called the public meeting, and that in fact the parts in the drama, that was enacted on this occasion, had been arranged beforehand.[1] The king commenced the proceedings of the assembly by asking each one in particular what he thought of the new doctrine. To this appeal Coifi, the chief of the king's own heathen priests, immediately answered, "O king, consider what this is which is now preached to us; for I verily declare to you, that the religion which we have hitherto professed has, as far as I can learn, no virtue in it. For none of your people has applied himself more diligently to the worship of our gods than I; and yet there are many who receive greater favours from you, and are more preferred than I, and are more prosperous in all their undertakings. Now, if the gods were good for anything, they would rather forward me, who have been more careful to serve them. It remains, therefore, that if upon examination you find those new doctrines, which are now preached to us, better and more efficacious, we immediately receive them without any delay." Other chiefs and nobles followed in the same strain, and one of their speeches is remarkable, as being, what Mr. Kemble calls, "the earliest specimen of English parliamentary eloquence." "The present life of man, O king (said he) seems to me, in comparison of that time which is unknown to us, like to the swift flight of a sparrow through the room wherein you sit at supper in winter, with your commanders and ministers, and a good fire in the midst, whilst the storms of rain and snow prevail abroad; the sparrow, I say, flying in at one door, and immediately out at another, whilst he is within, is safe from the wintry storm; but after a short space of fair weather, he immediately vanishes out of your sight, into the dark winter from which he had emerged. So this life of man appears for a short space; but of what went before, or what is to follow, we are utterly ignorant. If, therefore, this new doctrine contains something more certain, it seems justly to deserve to be followed." Paulinus was next invited to expound to the assembly the doctrines which he preached. At the close of his discourse, Coifi declared that he had long been sensible of the worthlessness of the heathen worship, because, the more diligently he sought after truth in that worship, the less he found it; that now he was ready to confess that Paulinus's preaching had an appearance of truth, as if it were indeed able to confer life, salvation, and eternal happiness. He also proposed the immediate destruction of the heathen altars and temples. The king then gave Paulinus his license to preach the gospel to the Northumbrians, and, renouncing idolatry, declared that he received the faith of Christ. He next enquired of Coifi who should first profane the idolatrous altars and places of worship, to which the priest answered, "I; for who can more properly than myself destroy those things which I worshipped through ignorance, for an example to all others, through the wisdom which has been given me by the true God?" Then requesting the king to furnish him with arms and a charger, he set out with a spear in his hand to profane a temple that was near, and to destroy the idols. By this conduct Coifi gave a public and conspicuous proof of his having renounced his former superstitions, inasmuch as by the custom of their heathenism, it was not lawful for a priest either to bear arms, or to mount any animal but a mare. The people seeing him act in this manner concluded that he was mad, but he, persevering in his course, cast the spear at the temple to profane it, and commanded his companions to destroy the building and its enclosures by fire. The place where this temple stood is not far from York, and was afterwards called Godmundingham, the home protected by the gods, and is now known by the name of Goodmanham.[1]

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[1] Bede, lib. ii. cap. 12.

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[1] Saxons in England, vol. ii. p. 241.

On Easter Day, in the year 627, Edwin, together with all his nobles and a great number of the people, received the rite of baptism in the wooden church of St. Peter's at York, which he had himself built, while he was undergoing the previous instruction of a catechumen. In that city he fixed the see of his instructor Paulinus; and after his baptism, he began to build, by the bishop's direction, a larger church of stone, on the same site on which the wooden church had been erected[2] and so as to enclose the same. This building, however, was not finished till the reign of his successor Oswald.

Paulinus continued for the next six years preaching the gospel with great success, both in Deira and Bernicia, the two provinces of which the kingdom of Northumbria consisted. Among those who were baptized were Osfrid and Eadfrid, two sons of Edwin by a former wife, as well as his children by Ethelberga. On one occasion the bishop is said to have accompanied the court to a country residence of the king in Glendale, in Northumberland, and spent several weeks in instructing and baptizing the country people from morning till night. He was also in the habit of attending the court to other places; and there being no oratories or baptisteries as yet in the country districts, the clear waters of the Glen and the Swale served for the purpose of initiating the catechumens in the holy rite. It is said, moreover, that he built a church at Doncaster, which was soon afterwards destroyed by the pagans at the time when Edwin was slain. In the year 627, through the influence of Edwin, Eorpwald, king of the East Angles, was induced to receive Christianity into his kingdom. It had indeed been introduced there by his father Redwald before, but in such a manner as to corrupt the purity of the faith by mixing up the worship of Christ and idols at the same time. Eorpwald did not live to see the progress of the gospel in East Anglia; and after his death, the country fell back into paganism for three years, until the accession of Sigebert, his brother, who had been converted to Christianity in France. This prince's zeal for the true faith was ably assisted by the exertions of Felix, a missionary from Burgundy, whom Honorius, then archbishop of Canterbury, sent to labour in East Anglia. Fursey also, a monk of Ireland, preached the gospel in the same kingdom with great success during the reign of Sigebert. Felix's see was fixed at Dunwich, on the coast of Suffolk (a place since overwhelmed by the sea), over which he presided with great success for seventeen years, where also a school was established for the education of the young. Sigebert appears to have been the first Anglo-Saxon king who adopted the practice (afterwards so common among royal persons) of giving up his crown to embrace the monastic profession.

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[1] Bede, lib. ii. cap. 13.

[2] The site is the same as that of the present magnificent minster of York. Parts of the fabric of Paulinus's second edifice have been discovered lately under the choir of the cathedral,

Paulinus had in the meanwhile extended his labours to the country which was then called Lindsey, on the south side of the Humber, as far as the town of Lincoln, where he built a stone church, in which the archbishop Honorius was consecrated by him as the successor of Justus, A.D. 627. He also baptized great numbers of converts in the river Trent, near Southwell, in Nottinghamshire; and there were persons living in Bede's time who had seen and conversed with those who had been baptized by him, and who described this illustrious bishop as a man tall of stature, a little stooping, with dark hair, meagre visage, aquiline nose, and a venerable and majestic aspect. The conversion of Edwin's kingdom to Christianity was attended with such blessings to the country, that it was said that a woman could go with a new-born babe from one end of it to the other, wherever Edwin's sway extended, without the slightest harm. An interesting fact is also recorded of this monarch, that he caused brass dishes to be placed near the highways wherever clear springs of water were found, for the refreshment of travellers, and none of these were ever appropriated for any other purpose than that for which they were designed by the giver.[1]

Honorius I., who was then Pope, hearing of the conversion of the Northumbrians, and of the Christian conduct of Edwin, sent the pall to Paulinus, A. D. 634, and with it a letter, addressed to Edwin, in commendation of his zeal and faith. In this letter he takes occasion to mention, that he had sent two palls to the two metropolitans, Honorius of Canterbury and Paulinus of York, and explains the intent with which those gifts were bestowed. The pall sent to the archbishop of Canterbury, was also accompanied with a letter from the Pope, the language of which is so plain with respect to the real meaning of the gift of the pall, as to put it beyond all doubt, that this ceremony was not intended (as some writers have supposed) as a mere compliment, but as a badge of the investment of the wearer with metropolitan powers, which the Pope claimed the right to bestow. "We grant you authority, that when the Divine Grace shall call either of you to Himself, the survivor shall ordain a bishop in the room of him that is deceased. To which effect also we have sent a pall to each of you, for celebrating the said ordination; that by the authority of our precept, you may make an ordination acceptable to God; because the long distance of sea and land that lies between us and you, has obliged us to grant you this, that no loss may happen to your Church in any way."[2] That the Pope was not justified in asserting this right, is of course what we cannot question; but it seems unreasonable to deny, that the ceremony was both intended and accepted as a mark of the archiepiscopal dignity, and as conveying powers which, without it, could not be exercised. This proceeding of the Pope was an attempt to carry out further the original plan of Gregory, for the organisation of the English Church under two metropolitans. The project appears to have been approved of by Edwin, if not suggested by him; and in pursuance of the papal directions in this respect, Honorius of Canterbury was actually consecrated by Paulinus at Lincoln, as was mentioned before.

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[1] Bede, lib. iii. cap. 16. [2] Ibid. lib. ii. cap. 18. Kemble, ii. 369. note.

Before these letters arrived at their place of destination Edwin was no longer in the land of the living. He was slain, A. D. 633, at Hatfield, near Doncaster, in a great battle against Penda, the heathen king of Mercia, and Cadwalla, the Christian king of the Britons, who were confederate against him in an unholy alliance. The confusion that ensued upon his death was, for the time being, nearly fatal to the infant Church of Northumbria. Paulinus was obliged to flee with the queen Ethelberga and the remnant of the royal family to Kent, where the church of Rochester being then vacant by the death of its bishop Romanus, he, at the request of archbishop Honorius, and Eadbald the king, took the charge of that see as its bishop. Christianity was not, however, extinguished in Northumbria, as James, the deacon, one of the most active and zealous of Paulinus's assistants, a man remarkable for his proficiency as a singer, remained in York, to carry on, as far as was practicable, the work of the mission. On Edwin's death, the two provinces of the kingdom of Northumbria devolved on different sovereigns, both of whom relapsed into heathenism, and soon came to an untimely end, being slain in battle against Cadwalla. In the year 635, Oswald, the son of Edwin's predecessor Ethelfrid, who had received a Christian education when in exile in Scotland, defeated and slew Cadwalla, and obtained possession of the throne of Northumbria. Oswald, who had shown himself to be a man of piety, by trusting to the support of Heaven in the day of his adversity, was careful, after his success, to do his utmost to promote the worship of the true God. He therefore sent to Scotland, where he had himself received the principles of the faith, for missionaries to instruct his people. At that time the monastery of Iona was the chief seminary of religion in the northern part of Britain. A monk of this place was sent in answer to Oswald's request, who, however, returned home without success, being disregarded by the English people, probably, as was suggested, because of his indiscreet severity towards his unlearned hearers. There was at that time in the college of monks at Iona, one Aidan, "a person (says Bede) of singular meekness, piety, and moderation, zealous in the cause of God, though not altogether according to knowledge, for he was wont to keep Easter Sunday according to the custom of his country.[1]" Aidan was already a bishop, having probably been consecrated in the Irish Church, of which the college of Iona formed a branch, and he was judged by his brethren to be the fittest person to fulfil the wishes of king Oswald. On his arrival in Northumbria, the king assigned him for his episcopal see the island of Lindisfarne, or Holy Island, off the coast of Northumberland. It is a remarkable fact, that the first of the Scottish missionaries who laboured for the conversion of the north of England, was so imperfectly acquainted with the language of the English people, that he needed an interpreter to express to them his meaning; and it is perhaps still more remarkable that the king himself (who had learned the Celtic language in his youth) was the person who performed that office for him, by interpreting the word to his commanders and ministers.

Bede's testimony to the piety and holiness of bishop Aidan is worthy of notice, inasmuch as he was to a certain extent prejudiced against him, because, in common with the other missionaries from the Irish Church, he taught differently from the Roman missionaries with respect to the time of keeping Easter. It was therefore no small proof of Bede's faithfulness and honesty, that he should give the following favourable picture of Aidan's life and manners; which I here transcribe, as a representation of the good missionary bishop of that day.[1] "It was the highest commendation of his doctrine, with all men, that he taught no otherwise than he and his followers had lived; for he neither sought nor loved anything of this world, but delighted in distributing immediately among the poor whatsoever was given him by the kings or rich men of the world. He was wont to traverse both town and country on foot, never on horseback, unless compelled by some urgent necessity; and wherever he saw any, either rich or poor, he invited them, if infidels, to embrace the mystery of the faith; or if they were believers, he sought to strengthen them in the faith, and to stir them up by words and actions to alms and good works. His course of life was so different from the slothfulness of our times, that all those who bore him company, whether they were shorn monks or laymen, were employed either in reading the Scriptures or learning psalms. This was the daily employment of himself and all that were with him, wheresoever they went; and if it happened, which was but seldom, that he was invited to eat with the king, he went with one or two clerks, and having taken a small repast, made haste to be gone with them, either to read or write. At that time, many religious men and women, stirred up by his example, adopted the custom of fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, till the ninth hour, throughout the year, except during the fifty days after Easter. He never gave money to the powerful men of the world, but only meat, if he happened to entertain them; and on the contrary, whatsoever gifts of money he received from the rich, he either distributed them, as has been said, to the use of the poor, or bestowed them in ransoming such as had been wrongfully sold for slaves. Moreover, he afterwards made many of those he had ransomed his disciples, and, after having taught and instructed them, advanced them to the order of priesthood."[1]

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[1] Bede, lib. iii. cap. 3.

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[1] Bede's Christian liberality towards bishop Aidan with respect to the point of difference about Easter is also shown in lib. iii. cap. 17., where, after objecting to his erroneous practice in this matter, he says, "Yet this I approve of in him, that, in the celebration of his Easter, the object which he had in view in all he said, did, or preached, was the same as our's, that is, the redemption of mankind, through the passion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven of the man Jesus Christ, who is the mediator between God and man."

Nor was Aidan left to labour alone in this promising field of duty. Other Scottish missionaries, most of whom were monks, followed him in great numbers to England, and with great devotion preached the word of God. Churches were built; money and lands given by Oswald's bounty to build monasteries; and under the dominion of so pious a king, with the additional blessing of so many zealous ministers of the gospel, the efforts that were made to extend the Church over the northern parts of England were eminently successful.

During the reign of Oswald in Northumbria, the kingdom of the West Saxons, or Wessex, received the faith of Christ by the preaching of Birinus, a Frankish bishop, who came into England by the advice of Pope Honorius. Oswald, who was a suitor for the daughter of Cynegils, the king of Wessex, assisted as sponsor at the baptism of this prince. Birinus's see was fixed at a place called Dorchester, near Oxford. Here he laboured with success for several years, until his death, and was succeeded by Agilbert, a Frenchman, who had long resided in Ireland for the purpose of studying the Holy Scriptures. Coinwalch, the king of Wessex, afterwards erected another episcopal see for his kingdom at Winchester, to which he appointed Wini, a native of the country, who had, however, received consecration in France. At this Agilbert took offence and retired into France, and was made bishop of Paris, which see he retained till his death, notwithstanding the entreaties of Coinwalch that he would return to his former diocese. Wini, who seems to have been a man unworthy of his high office, was afterwards expelled from Winchester, and took refuge with Wulfhere, king of the Mercians, of whom he purchased for money the see of London, which he retained till his death. In consequence of these changes the kingdom of Wessex remained some time without a bishop, until Eleutherius, the nephew of Agilbert, was consecrated to the whole of the bishopric of the West Saxons.

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[1] Bede, lib. iii. cap. 5.

Oswald, king of Northumbria, having been slain in battle against Penda, king of Mercia, was succeeded in the kingdom of Bernicia by his brother Oswy, in whose reign, A. D. 653, the Mercian kingdom also received the faith. The daughter of the savage Penda had married Alfrid, Oswy's son; and Penda's son now sought to establish a second connexion with the Northumbrian family by marrying Oswy's daughter. His suit was, however, refused, except on the condition of his becoming a Christian: and, according to Bede, when he had heard the gospel preached, he was so captivated with it, that he declared he would willingly become a Christian, even though he did not obtain the lady. The influence of his brother-in-law, Alfrid, was exerted to move him to take the decisive step of embracing Christianity; and, after receiving the rite of baptism, with his nobles and the rest of his train, he returned into Mercia, taking with him four missionaries, to preach to the Mercian people. One of these was a Scot, of the name of Diuma, who was consecrated by bishop Finan (the successor of Aidan at Lindisfarne) to be bishop of the Middle Angles and Mercians. Diuma's see was fixed at Repton, in Derbyshire, from which it was afterwards moved to Lichfield. The preaching of these missionaries was willingly received by the Mercians; and even Penda, the king, though a heathen, was so far from opposing their work, that he allowed all who chose to listen to them, to embrace the faith without molestation, ~~and~~ spoke contemptuously of those who professed to believe without living in accordance with their profession.

About the same time, also, through the persuasion of Oswy, Sigebert, king of Essex, who often came to visit the court of Northumbria as a friend, was led to embrace the faith, and was baptized by bishop Finan. The people of Essex had remained in a state of heathenism ever since the expulsion of bishop Mellitus; but now, through the exertions of king Oswy, missionaries were sent among them, one of whom, Cedd, was consecrated bishop of the East Saxons, and built several churches and oratories in different parts of the country. Cedd, notwithstanding his being a bishop of a southern see, was in the habit of revisiting his own country of Northumbria from time to time; and he even founded a monastery in the north, at Lastingham, in Cleveland, where he died.

We have seen that some of the most eminent, laborious, and successful missionaries, by whom Saxon England was converted to Christianity, were Scots from the island of Iona. Nearly all of these differed from the rest of the Western Church about the time of observing Easter; and some, we are told, went so far in the maintenance of their opinion on this point, as to refuse communion with their brethren who adopted the practice which was then sanctioned by the rest of the Church, and which has since universally prevailed. Pope Honorius had written, A.D. 634, to the Irish bishops to exhort them to conformity with the general usage on this point, but in vain. It is evident that the papal authority was not in these earlier times strong enough to prevail over the force of deep-rooted customs, to which the inhabitants of these remote islands of the west were firmly attached. The Irish, and their pupils the Scots, also differed from the Roman missionaries, and those who had been taught by them, in the form of tonsure, or mode of shaving the head, adopted by the clergy. The Irish and Scotch missionaries shaved the fore part of the head in the shape of a crescent; the Roman clergy and monks shaved the crown of the head, which was surrounded by a circle of hair, intended to represent the Saviour's crown of thorns. Each party pretended high authority for their own fashion of observing a practice, which certainly could not pretend to any great antiquity. The tonsure, considered as a distinctive mark of those who had been admitted into the clerical order, does not appear to have existed in the first four centuries of Christianity. The shaven crown was even condemned by some of the Fathers, as a ceremony peculiar to the heathen priests of Isis. As long hair, however, was a mark of effeminacy, it seemed proper that the Christian clergy should avoid such a cause of scandal; and hence, probably, the canonical directions on the subject took their origin.[1]

These differences between the Scottish clergy and those who had been taught the Roman system, did not, it seems, extend to anything beyond matters of ceremonial. They taught the same doctrine; they used the same means for the propagation of the faith, according to the light which they had received; they endeavoured, by the exercise of the most rigid austerities, to attain to that perfection to which the monastic creed of the day led them to aspire; they did, in fact, in many ways adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, by extending His kingdom upon earth, and bringing souls out of the darkness of heathenism into His marvellous light. Such men as Aidan of Lindisfarne, and Chad, and Wilfrid, of whom we shall soon have to speak, were indeed men whom we need not be ashamed to call lights of the Church to which they belonged, though we may think the term "saints" misapplied, when given to those whose system of teaching contained so much of human infirmity and corruption. We may lament that their differences about such unimportant matters as the time of keeping Easter, the tonsure, and the like, should have been so magnified as to lead eventually to a total rupture; but the experience of all ecclesiastical history testifies that such catastrophes do frequently result from very trivial causes.

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[1] Bingham, lib. vii. chap. iii. § 6.

And after all, unimportant as the points were in themselves, they seemed to involve a question of no small magnitude,—even that of submission or resistance to the encroachments of the Roman see. Such was the view of one who first appears upon the scene of ecclesiastical history towards the middle of the seventh century, and who was destined to be the chief instrument for finishing that spiritual subjection of Britain to Rome, which Augustine had vainly attempted. Wilfrid, the person of whom we speak, was a Northumbrian youth of good parentage, who had been brought up at the monastery of Lindisfarne, but was early smitten with an intense desire of visiting Rome, and learning from close inspection the usages of the Roman Church. Through the kindness of Eanfleda, the Northumbrian queen, he was permitted to accomplish this object; and, when not more than eighteen or nineteen years of age, he set out on his journey Benedict to Italy, accompanied by another young Northumbrian, also to be mentioned hereafter, named Benedict or Bennet Biscop. At Lyons, Delphinus, the archbishop of that city, attempted to detain him by the offer of his niece in marriage, but in vain. He pursued his journey to Rome; and there, under the tuition of Boniface, the archdeacon, he was amply instructed in all the details of the Roman ecclesiastical system. On his way home he received the clerical tonsure at Lyons from his friend Delphinus; and a persecution having arisen against the Church there, in which Delphinus suffered death, Wilfrid was a witness, and narrowly escaped being a sharer of his fate. Arriving in England, he was at once taken into favour by Alfrid, the son of king Oswy, who obtained for him a grant of land in Lincolnshire, then under Oswy's sway, upon which he founded a monastery at Stamford. From this he was afterwards removed to be abbot of a monastery which Alfrid had founded in Ripon, having been previously ordained priest by bishop Agilbert. This was the position occupied by Wilfrid in 664, when the disputes between the Scottish and Roman clergy in the kingdom of Northumbria came to a crisis, which seemed to require the interference of authority. King Oswy, having been himself taught by the Scottish missionaries, had married Eanfleda, the daughter of Edwin, who had been trained under Paulinus, himself a missionary of Rome, and had spent her youth at the Kentish court, where Roman practices prevailed. Her son Alfrid had been trained to the same views, which had probably been much strengthened by his connexion with Wilfrid. Hence a different usage prevailed in the court itself,—the king keeping the joyous festival of Easter, while the queen and prince and their followers were still engaged in the austerities of Lent. This difference seems to have caused some scandal and breach of charity, and therefore it became very desirable that it should be terminated by an amicable conference upon the points in dispute. Such a conference was accordingly arranged to take place at Whitby, in a monastery presided over by the abbess Hilda, a woman of extraordinary piety. There were present at this meeting Colman (who had succeeded Finan as bishop of Lindisfarne), with his Scottish clergy, and also Agilbert, bishop of the West Saxons, and Agatho a priest who accompanied him; Cedd, bishop of the East Saxons; Wilfrid; James, before mentioned as the deacon of Paulinus; and Romanus, a Kentish priest attached to the queen's household. Agilbert, with Wilfrid, Agatho, James, and Romanus, maintained the Roman practice of keeping Easter; and Cedd, who understood the Celtic language (having been consecrated by the Scots), acted as interpreter between the parties.

The king opened the business of the synod with a brief speech on the importance of uniformity of ceremonial, as well as of practice, among those who expected the same kingdom of heaven; and then commanded Colman to declare what the custom was which he observed, and whence derived. Colman, in reply, alleged the authority of his elders, who had sent him to be bishop there, and who had received the same custom from their fathers, as derived from St. John the beloved disciple. Agilbert being next appealed to, put forth Wilfrid to speak in his behalf, as being better acquainted than himself with the English language. Wilfrid then declared that the custom which he and his friends observed, of keeping Easter, he had seen followed at Rome, where the apostles Peter and Paul lived, taught, suffered, and were buried; and that it prevailed in France and Italy, in Africa, Asia, Egypt, Greece, and all the world, wherever the Church of Christ was spread abroad, through several nations and tongues; except only among the Scots, and their accomplices in obstinacy, the Picts and the Britons, who foolishly, in two remote islands, and only even in part of them, opposed all the rest of the world. In answer to Colman's allegation of the authority of St. John, Wilfrid pleaded the example of St. Peter, as having, when he preached at Rome, established the Roman rule for keeping Easter; and also the sanction of the Council of Nice, which had confirmed that rule afresh. Colman then referred to the authority of Anatolius[1], who had written on this controversy, and also to that of Columba and his successors, whose sanctity was testified by their working of miracles. Wilfrid, in reply, admitted that Columba and his followers might have been holy men, and servants of God; and that their keeping of Easter erroneously might not altogether be imputed to them as a fault, for want of somebody to teach them better; but that would not justify Colman and his followers, if, after hearing the decrees of the apostolic see and of the Universal Church, they refused to follow them. "And if (he concluded) that Columba of yours (and I may say, ours also, if he was Christ's servant,) was a holy man and powerful in miracles, yet, could he be preferred before the most blessed Prince of the Apostles, to whom our Lord said, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and to thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven?'"

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[1] An Alexandrian philosopher and divine, who was made bishop of Laodicea in the latter half of the 3rd century, and who published canons for ascertaining Easter. Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. vii. cap. 32.

When Wilfrid had spoken thus, the king said, "Is it true, Colman, that these words were spoken to Peter by our Lord?" He answered, "It is true, O king." Then said he, "Can you show any such power given to your Columba?" Colman answered, "None." Then added the king, "Do you both agree that these words were principally directed to Peter, and that the keys of heaven were given to him by our Lord?" They both answered, "We do." Then the king concluded, "And I also say unto you, that he is the door-keeper, whom I will not contradict, but will, as far as I know and am able, in all things obey his decrees, lest, when I come to the gates of the kingdom of heaven, there should be none to open them, he being my adversary who is proved to have the keys."[1] This jest of the king's, who probably was, through the influence of the queen, willing to believe the Roman practice to be right, was received with general applause by those who were present; with the exception of Colman and his adherents, who, finding their doctrine rejected, and themselves despised, retired in disgust to Scotland. Cedd, who had been a disciple of the Scots, renounced their practices, and on his return to his diocese conformed to the Roman usage of observing Easter. Colman was succeeded in his see by Tuda, who was the last of the Scottish succession of Northumbrian bishops, and who also observed the Roman practice. In looking back upon this controversy, we may feel at first disposed to regret, that on this occasion of the conference of Whitby, as well as on that of Augustine's discussion with the British bishops, so much stubbornness was shown in resisting a change which had the sanction of the authority of nearly the whole Church. At the same time we must admit, that the fact of the resistance of the dissentient party in each case to the alleged authority of the Church of Rome is an important testimony, that that Church was not in the 7th century universally acknowledged in the west, as "the mother and mistress of all Churches."[1] Although both the Scots and Britons ultimately reformed their calendar according to the Roman computation, so strong was the feeling of resistance on the subject, that it was not before the beginning of the 8th century, that the new mode of reckoning was generally adopted in Scotland and Ireland; and the old method was retained among the Britons in Wales to the latter part of that century.

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[1] Bede, lib. iii. cap. 25.

At the period of the Synod of Whitby, seven only of the eight Anglo-Saxon kingdoms had received the faith of Christ. It was not till several years afterwards, that Sussex, the eighth, became Christian; but although the conversion of Sussex properly belongs to a later period, it seems most convenient to mention it here. The first labourers in this field were a small body of Scottish monks under Dicul, one of the companions of Fursdey, who had fixed their abode at Bosham, near Chichester; but it does not appear that they produced any effect upon the heathen people around them. Afterwards, Ethelwalch, the sovereign of the country, was baptized at the court of Wulfhere, king of Mercia. Not long after the conversion of this king, *i. e.* A.D. 681, Wilfrid, then a bishop, but banished from his see in the north, (as we shall have occasion to mention afterwards), took refuge from his enemies in Sussex. Having arrived there, and being kindly received by Ethelwalch, he could not (we are told) be restrained from preaching the gospel, in a country which offered a field so inviting to the zeal of an active and laborious missionary. Wilfrid found the poor people of Sussex suffering the greatest extremity of distress from famine, the harvest having failed in consequence of continued drought. So helpless was their state, that in the depth of their despair they were wont to throw themselves in numbers from precipices into the sea, or to suffer the waves to wash them away. Under these circumstances, the first object seemed to be to furnish them with the means of saving their lives; and this Wilfrid accomplished by providing them with nets, and teaching them to get their food by fishing. By this great benefit the bishop gained their affections, and, having procured them food for their temporal wants, had no difficulty in persuading them to lend a ready ear to his exhortations, that they should "labour for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life." The king of Sussex, to show his gratitude for these unspeakable benefits, granted Wilfrid lands at Selsey for the maintenance of himself and his followers. Here he founded a monastery, and for five years performed the office of a bishop among the people of Sussex, until an opportunity offered for his return to his own country. A noble act of Christian charity is recorded of Wilfrid, with relation to the gift of the king. The lands which he received contained a population of eighty-seven families, of whom 250 men and women were, according to the Anglo-Saxon laws, devoted to a state of perpetual servitude to the lord of the soil. No sooner had Wilfrid obtained possession of the lands, than he gave entire freedom to these poor creatures; and at the same time that he delivered them from their temporal bondage, he showed them the way of entrance into the liberty of the children of God, by teaching them the principles of the Christian faith.

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[1] Creed of Pope Pius IV.

The preaching of Christianity in Sussex by Wilfrid, completes the history of the conversion of Saxon England. Thus we see that, in the space of less than ninety years, the whole country was Christianised. This was a remarkable progress, worthy of the divine origin of the faith which thus triumphed over one of the most savage and barbarous of the nations that overran and dismembered the Roman empire. We may possibly find in the errors of our pagan forefathers, as in those of other heathen nations, the germs of truth; but still, idolatry, whether we survey it in its ancient or modern forms, is in some of its main features the same,—ever cruel, sensual, selfish, and brutalising. Whether we regard it in the pompous shrines of Grecian or Egyptian mythology, or in the more splendid ceremonial of Hindoo or Chinese heathenism; whether, as it existed of old, in the rude spells and savage rites of Teutonic or Scandinavian superstition, or as it is to be found at present in the abominable sensualities of the devil-worshippers of India: in whatever clime, at whatever period of the world, we encounter it, it is still that detestable and accursed thing, which nothing but the finger of God can cast out of the land in which it has taken root. In the history of the conversion of England, there is one point that must strike every attentive reader, as remarkable, — viz., the very prominent part which the sovereigns of the different states took in the work of propagating the Gospel. Ethelbert of Kent, Edwin, Oswald, and Oswy of Northumbria, Sigebert of Essex, and Sigebert of East Anglia, all took the lead in the great work of evangelising their subjects. Oswald even acted as interpreter between the Scot Aidan and the Saxons to whom he preached. Sigebert of East Anglia set the first example among the Anglo-Saxon princes of quitting a throne for a monastery; and when drawn against his will out of his retreat by his terrified subjects to oppose the invasion of the heathen Penda, he chose rather to be slain without resistance than, by drawing the sword, to renounce his religious profession.

Such instances as these are sufficient answers to the unfavourable inferences, which some persons might draw from the repeated cases of apostasy of sovereigns, and even of whole kingdoms, which we meet with in the history of the first century after Augustine's mission. In reality these facts prove nothing but that the religious impressions in these particular cases were not lasting. And who that considers the small number of the missionaries, their ignorance of the language of the people (a remark which applies equally to the Scottish clergy and to the Roman), and above all, the uncertain durability of religious impressions in the minds of the common people at all times, will not rather wonder that so many remained firm, than that some apostatised? Moreover, the apostasy was in no case lasting: soon after the middle of the 7th century, all the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, except Sussex, may be considered as having decidedly embraced Christianity, and not many years after Theodore of Tarsus had succeeded to the throne of Canterbury, he was obeyed as archbishop of all England — as the head, not of a few missionaries or monks scattered here and there, but of a regularly organised national Church.

CHAP. V.

FROM THE ACCESSION OF THEODORE TO THE PRIMACY TO THE DEATH OF WILFRID.

The year 664, in which the Synod of Whitby was held, was remarkable for a great pestilence, of which Deus-dedit, the first Anglo-Saxon archbishop of Canterbury, died. After this the metropolitan see was for some time vacant, but at length two of the Saxon kings, Oswy of Northumberland, and Egbert of Kent, consulted together as to the best means of filling up the vacancy. They chose an English priest from among the late archbishop's clergy, by name Wighard, whom they sent to Rome, with a request to Vitalian, the Pope, that he might be consecrated archbishop of the Church of England. Wighard, soon after his arrival in Rome, and before he could obtain consecration, died of a pestilence which was raging there. It seems probable from Bede's narrative, though the matter is not so stated in words, that, upon this circumstance being known in England, the two kings, being at a loss whom to recommend, requested Vitalian to appoint an archbishop.[1]

Whether, however, they made this request or not, there is no question that, after Wighard's death, Vitalian began to look out for a suitable person to fill the vacant metropolitan chair. His first choice fell upon a learned monk, of the name of Hadrian, by nation an African, abbot of a monastery near Naples, well skilled both in the Greek and Latin tongues. Hadrian, however, declined from modesty, and after some farther inquiry and delay, recommended Theodore to the Pope for the office. Theodore was a monk of Tarsus, of great learning both in Greek and Latin, sacred and profane literature, and advanced in life, being then sixty-six years of age. Vitalian approved of Theodore as worthy of the high dignity, but having some apprehensions lest, being a Greek, he should show any tendency to innovations not approved of by the see of Rome, he accepted him only on the condition that Hadrian should accompany him to England. Theodore's consecration took place at Rome in March, A. D. 668, and not long afterwards he and Hadrian set out on their journey. Being delayed by various circumstances on his way through France, he did not arrive in Canterbury before the spring of 669. Hadrian was detained in France some time longer than Theodore, being for some reason or other regarded with suspicion by the authorities there. At length he reached Canterbury in safety, and, after the lapse of two years, was appointed by Theodore abbot of the monastery of St. Peter and St. Paul in that city. Soon after Hadrian's arrival Theodore proceeded to hold a visitation of his province. His jurisdiction extended over the whole of Saxon England, including the province of York, to which no metropolitan had been appointed since Paulinus's death in 644. Wherever Theodore went he was attended by Hadrian, and in all churches which he visited he took especial care to lay down the orthodox rule about the celebration of Easter.

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[1] Compare Bede, lib. iii. cap. 29. with lib. iv. cap. 1.; and see Kemble, vol. ii. 365. note; Churton's Early English Church, p. 75.

A more lasting benefit was conferred by Theodore upon his adopted country, by the diffusion among the people of sacred and profane learning, through the knowledge of the Greek and Latin tongues, as well as of poetry, astronomy, and arithmetic. Both he and Hadrian were distinguished as scholars, and they appear to have given up a portion of their own time to the labour of personal instruction, since Bede tells us, that in his day some of their scholars were still living, who were as well versed in the Greek and Latin languages as in their own. The ancient library, founded by Augustine at Canterbury, was considerably augmented by Theodore; and to the exertions of this prelate may be attributed, in a great measure, the literary fame which Saxon England acquired in the course of the succeeding century.

Theodore soon found in the Northumbrian diocese a necessity for his authoritative interference. On the death of Tuda in 665, Wilfrid had, through the influence of his friend Alfrid, been appointed his successor, and had gone over into France for consecration, probably on account of the difference with the Scottish bishops respecting Easter. Instead of returning home immediately after the ceremony, he made some stay among the French bishops; and this delay seems to have served as an excuse for another appointment being made to his see in his absence. The person thus chosen was Ceadda, or Chad, brother of bishop Cedd, and abbot of Lastingham, a man of great piety and humility, whom Oswy nominated to the bishopric of York. Chad having gone to Kent for consecration, found that archbishop Deus-dedit was dead, and thereupon he had recourse to Wini, bishop of Winchester, who consecrated him with the assistance of two British bishops, who kept Easter after the orthodox manner. Wilfrid, on his arrival in the North, finding his see occupied, returned to the government of his monastery of Ripon. The case of this double appointment to the Northumbrian see was soon brought before the notice of Theodore, who at once decided (probably because he did not choose to acknowledge the British bishops as lawful bishops) that Chad had not been duly consecrated, and upbraided him on this account. "If you know I have not duly received episcopal ordination," was the answer, "I willingly resign the office; for I never thought myself worthy of it, but though unworthy, in obedience submitted to undertake it." Theodore, struck with the humility of this answer, would not allow him to resign the office, but performed what was wanting to complete the ordination canonically, by the imposition of his own hands.[1]

Wilfrid was then put in possession of his own see, and fixed his residence at York, instead of Lindisfarne, where his predecessors had resided. Chad retired to his peaceful abbey of Lastingham; but there he did not long remain; for Theodore being asked by Wulfhere, king of the Mercians, to supply his people with a bishop in the place of Jaruman, who was lately dead, recommended Chad for the office. His episcopal see was fixed at Lichfield, where he also died, after a life of exemplary devotion and holiness. An interesting proof of his piety is recorded, viz. that he was accustomed, during violent storms of thunder and lightning, to repair to the church, and spend the time in prayer and singing of psalms until the weather was calm. He used to say that the Lord sent storms to put men in mind of the future judgment, to dispel their pride and vanquish their boldness, by bringing into their thoughts that dreadful time when, the heavens and the earth being in flame, He will come in the clouds, with great power and majesty, to judge the quick and the dead. "Wherefore," he added, "it behoves us to answer His heavenly admonition with due fear and love; that as often as He lifts His hand through the trembling sky, as it were to strike, but does not yet let it fall, we may immediately implore His mercy; and searching the recesses of our hearts, and cleansing the filth of our vices, we may carefully behave ourselves so as never to be struck."[2]

Chad's diocese was very extensive, comprehending the Mercians and Middle Angles, and Lindsey, *i. e.,* from the county of Lincoln to Staffordshire, and including part of Cheshire and Shropshire.[3]

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[1] Bede, lib. iv. cap. 2.

[2] Bede, lib. iv. cap. 3. Jeremy Taylor, Life of Christ, Discourse xviii., refers to this custom of Chad's, and beautifully observes, "he that will not fear, when God speaks so loud, is not yet made soft with the impresses and perpetual droppings of religion."

[3] Giles's note to Bede, lib. iv. cap. 3.

The year 673 is remarkable, in our ecclesiastical annals, for the meeting of the first regular synod of the English Church, which was summoned by archbishop Theodore to meet at Hertford. There were present, besides other ecclesiastics of inferior order, Bisi, bishop of the East Angles, Putta, bishop of Rochester, Eleutherius, bishop of the West Saxons, and Winfrid, who had succeeded, on the death of Chad, to the see of Lichfield. Wilfrid, bishop of York, sent his proxies to the council.

Theodore, after obtaining from the assembled prelates a declaration of their adherence to the ancient decrees of the Church, proceeded to lay before them ten canons, to which he required their particular assent. The first of these related to the celebration of Easter at the canonical time. The second, fifth, and sixth related to the internal regulation of dioceses, and they form in substance part of the customary law of the Church of England even at this day. They forbid the intrusion of one bishop into another's diocese; they forbid the clergy from forsaking their own diocesan, and wandering elsewhere without letters commendatory from him; or from exercising any priestly functions in another diocese without the leave of its bishop. Provision was also made for the protection of the property of monasteries from the interference of bishops, and against monks wandering about from monastery to monastery without the consent of their abbot. No bishop was, through ambition, to set himself before another, but each was to rank according to the order of his consecration. A canon was also inserted against divorces and incestuous marriages. It was agreed that a synod should be held every year on the first of August at a place called Cloveshoo.[1] In conclusion, sentence of excommunication was pronounced against all who should oppose or infringe these canons, and such persons were to be excluded from exercising any priestly functions. The subject of increasing the number of bishops, in proportion to the increase of believers, was also taken into consideration ; but it appears that nothing was then determined on that point, whether in consequence of opposition on the part of any of the council, or some other cause, we are not informed. It was, however, a matter of too urgent importance to be long neglected, and we cannot be surprised that so able a metropolitan as Theodore should afterwards press the division of some of the larger dioceses, though his zeal in this respect appears to have gone beyond the bounds both of law and justice.

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[1] The situation of this place has been the subject of much discussion. Mr. Kemble places it near Tewksbury, in Gloucestershire, vol. ii. 191. note. Johnson's Canons, i. 90—94.

Perhaps Theodore's disposition may have inclined him to be somewhat arbitrary and imperious. It seems impossible to regard his proceedings in deposing Winfrid, bishop of Lichfield, for some offence or other, and consecrating Sexwulf in his place, in any other light than as a stretch of metropolitan authority beyond the canons. His conduct towards Wilfrid was still more unjustifiable, and gave him cause for bitter repentance in his latter days.

That prelate had found, on his restoration to his see, work enough in so ample a diocese to task his utmost powers. The stone church of Paulinus at York was in a ruinous state, with the walls cracked, and the rain pouring through the roof. During the vacancy of the see of Canterbury, Wilfrid had been asked to perform some episcopal functions for that diocese, and had taken the opportunity of his visit to Kent to procure there a body of masons and other artificers skilled in church-building. He also took with him to York a precentor, by name Eddius Stephanus (who afterwards wrote his patron's life), that he might teach the Roman or Gregorian mode of chanting to the Churches of Northumbria. The Kentish masons were soon provided with ample employment. The cathedral at York was restored and greatly improved; the roof was covered with lead, and the windows, which were before mere lattices of wood with linen curtains, were filled with glass. Wilfrid's next work was to build an entirely new basilica at Ripon of polished stone, supported by pillars, with a portico at each entrance. Egfrid, the king of Northumbria, contributed towards the completion of this work, and endowed the abbey most liberally; and its consecration was celebrated with three days' feasting, at which the king and his nobles were present. The splendour of Ripon was, however, eclipsed by another of Wilfrid's churches, the abbey of Hexham, of which the foundations were laid deep in the solid rock, and of which his biographer declares that there was no church like it on this side of the Alps. Nor were Wilfrid's energies employed only in raising the material fabric of the Church in a manner worthy of the subject, or in beautifying the service of the sanctuary, to the neglect of that great spiritual work which it is the office of a bishop to fulfil. On the contrary, he laboured diligently in the visitation of his vast diocese, preaching, baptizing, confirming, regulating monasteries, educating the children of the great and noble; living a life not only of self-denial and holiness, but of monkish austerity. Theodore was so sensible of Wilfrid's devotion to his work, that he is said to have insisted on his no longer going on foot to the distant parts of his diocese, but on horseback; and when Wilfrid was unwilling to make this change, Theodore, to remove his scruples, himself lifted him with his own hands on horseback. This state of things continued for some years, and after the death of Alfrid and Oswy, Wilfrid enjoyed the favour of Egfrid, the second son of Oswy, who succeeded his father on the throne of Northumbria. At length an occurrence took place which converted Egfrid from a friend into an enemy of Wilfrid. Egfrid's first queen was a lady of the name of Etheldrida, who, according to the singular notions of monastic perfection which then prevailed, is said, though twice married, to have made and kept a vow of perpetual virginity, and who afterwards actually became a nun.[1] Egfrid sought the interference of the bishop of York to overcome this strange fancy, but it appears that Wilfrid's influence was used rather to encourage her in opposition, than to persuade her into compliance. This was his first offence in the eyes of Egfrid. This prince took for his second wife Ermenburga, the sister of the king of Wessex, a princess of a proud and imperious disposition, who could ill brook the ascendancy in her husband's kingdom of so powerful and wealthy a prelate as Wilfrid. Beside the income arising from the extensive endowments of the bishopric of York, Wilfrid's monasteries of Hexham and Ripon, which he held as benefices, added considerably both to his dignity and wealth, and the splendour and magnificence which he displayed in the ceremonial of his churches were calculated to excite the jealousy of those who were disposed to make invidious comparisons between the secular and ecclesiastical powers. This feeling appears to have had great influence over the queen's mind, and was probably shared by Egfrid, already considerably prejudiced against his powerful subject. Hence the persecution which followed against Wilfrid, and which was plausibly grounded on the pretext of ecclesiastical reform.

We have already referred to the proposal laid before the council of Hertford, to increase the number of bishops, according to the increase of the number of the faithful. Although nothing was then determined on that point by the synod, there can be no doubt, from the general course of Theodore's policy, that he considered it a matter of essential importance to break up the larger dioceses. Among these, York seemed more particularly to require division, and, therefore, the archbishop's attention was naturally directed to the accomplishment of so desirable a change. This, however, could only be lawfully and canonically effected with the consent of Wilfrid during his occupation of the see; and it is a serious charge against Theodore (as he felt himself in the close of his life) that, under the pretence of effecting what was unquestionably a good thing for the Church, he stooped to gratify the enmity of Egfrid and Ermenburga against Wilfrid by assisting in the persecution of that prelate. Acting, as it is said, upon their representations, Theodore took a step which amounted to depriving Wilfrid of his see. Without waiting for Wilfrid's consent, and without the assistance of any other bishop, he consecrated three new prelates to as many divisions of the diocese of York, viz. Bosa to York for the kingdom of Deira, Eata to Hexham, with Lindisfarne, for the kingdom of Bernicia, and Eadhed for the province of Lindsey, which Egfrid had conquered from the Mercians.

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[1] Etheldrida died abbess of Ely, and was canonised, as a model of saintly perfection. Bede, lib. iv. cap. 19.

Wilfrid appeared before Egfrid and his council, and complained of these illegal proceedings, but without effect. His remonstrances were received with contempt, and he resolved to appeal to the Pope from the injustice of his metropolitan and the harshness of his sovereign. His enemies, however, were persevering enough to follow him out of the country, and strong enough to cause snares to be laid for his life on the other side of the channel. From these dangers he was saved by a storm which drove the vessel in which he was embarked on the coasts of Friesland. There the nobler part of Wilfrid's character displayed itself; and he took advantage of the occasion to preach the gospel to the heathen king and his people, who had received him with their hospitality. So it came to pass that Wilfrid was the first of a gallant band of Anglo-Saxon missionaries, who for upwards of a century devoted themselves to the noble work of evangelising Holland, and the northern parts of Germany. The next year, having declined the bishopric of Strasburg, which was offered him by Dagobert, the king of Alsace, he proceeded on his journey to Rome. Agatho, who then filled the papal chair, summoned a synod of fifty bishops to consider Wilfrid's appeal. Wilfrid was admitted himself before the synod to present his petition, which was expressed in moderate language. He complained that Theodore had, in pursuance of what had been determined by a certain convention of prelates, usurped his see, by consecrating three bishops to it in his lifetime without his consent, and contrary to the canons. He spoke respectfully of Theodore, and expressed his willingness, if the synod thought that more bishops should be provided for his diocese, to acquiesce, provided that the persons chosen were persons with whom he could co-operate. Although Theodore had sent his own advocate to the papal court, to defend the proceedings against Wilfrid, it appears that there really was no canonical offence proved against him, and therefore nothing which could be considered sufficient to justify a deprivation of his see. The Pope, foreseeing doubtless the great importance of such a precedent, commended his faithfulness, because he had not resisted the proceedings by secular means, but had appealed to the apostolic see. The synod, moreover, decreed unanimously, that Wilfrid should take the bishopric which he lately had, and that such bishops as he should choose with the consent of a provincial synod, having been first consecrated by Theodore, should be promoted to be Wilfrid's coadjutors, after the expulsion of those who in his absence had been irregularly put into possession of his bishopric. To this sentence was added an anathema against those who should refuse to receive it.[1] Wilfrid having been thus acquitted, was summoned by the Pope to attend another council of one hundred and twenty-five bishops assembled at Rome to condemn what was called the Monothelite heresy.[2] At that council he subscribed a declaration of orthodox faith, "in the name of the northern part of Britain and Ireland, inhabited by the English and Britons, as also by the Scots and Picts;"[1] and after staying some time at Rome, and escaping fresh dangers on his journey homewards from the machinations of his enemies, returned to England.

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[1] Johnson's Canons, vol. i. pp. 115—119.

[2] A doctrine that maintained that our Lord Jesus Christ had but one will in His two natures.

What effect the determination of the papal synod in Wilfrid's favour had upon Theodore, we are not informed. When, however, Wilfrid laid the papal decrees before Egfrid, he was accused of having obtained them by fraud and bribery, and at once cast into prison, where he remained for some months. Being at length liberated at the suit of the Abbess Ebba, on condition of his leaving the country, he first sought an asylum in the kingdom of Mercia, and when driven thence by the intrigues of his enemies, he fled into Wessex. Here, however, he was not allowed to rest, but finally he found safety in the midst of the heathen people of Sussex, whom, as we have mentioned before, he was the means of converting to Christianity. During his stay in that country, Cœdwalla, king of Wessex, conquered both Sussex and the Isle of Wight, which was still heathen, and gave one fourth of the lands and the booty in the island to Wilfrid, for the use of the Church. This gift was handed over by Wilfrid to his nephew, whom with a priest of the name of Hiddila, he sent into the island as missionaries to preach the gospel to the natives. When he left Sussex, no bishop succeeded him at Selsey; the Churches of Sussex and the Isle of Wight were for several years subject to the see of Winchester.

Wilfrid's departure from Sussex was occasioned by an event altogether unexpected. Theodore, whose life was now drawing to a close, became sensible of the injustice of his conduct towards Wilfrid, and wished to make his peace with him before his death. He accordingly sent for him, and in the presence of Earconwald, bishop of London, asked his forgiveness, at the same time promising to intercede for him to the princes who had persecuted him, and requesting that he would be his successor in the archiepiscopal see. To the last proposal Wilfrid gave a decided refusal, on the ground that the matter was one which could only be decided by a lawful synod; he readily, however, gave the forgiveness which was asked, and accepted the offer of the archbishop's good offices. Theodore then wrote letters on his behalf both to the kings of Mercia and Northumbria. The result was that Aldfrid[1], who succeeded Egbert on the throne of Northumbria, when that prince fell in battle against the Picts, gave Wilfrid immediate possession of the abbey of Hexham, and shortly afterwards restored to him both the see of York and the monastery of Ripon. Bosa, who had been consecrated by Theodore as bishop of York, and John, who had succeeded Eata as bishop of Hexham, both retired peaceably to make way for Wilfrid. The see of Lindisfarne still remained separate from that of York, and was then held by a pious man named Cuthbert, but on his death, which took place soon afterwards, Wilfrid regained possession of the whole of the ancient see of York. He, however, retained the see of Lindisfarne only one year, after which Eadbert was appointed as the successor of Cuthbert.

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[1] Bede, lib. v. p. 19.

These results of his reconciliation with Wilfrid, Theodore did not live to see, having died in 690, at the advanced age of eighty-eight. After an interval of two years he was succeeded in the primacy by Berthwald, abbot of Reculver in Kent, who was consecrated in France. During his primacy Wilfrid became involved in another dispute with Aldfrid the king of Northumbria. The chief subject of contention between them was Aldfrid's proposal to convert Wilfrid's favourite monastery of Ripon into a bishop's see, to which Wilfrid strongly objected. The arrangements made by Theodore with respect to the division of his diocese were pressed upon him, but he refused to be bound by them, and in the end, rather than submit to the king's will, he chose once more to go into banishment.

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[1] It appears that this Aldfrid was an illegitimate son of king Oswy, and is not to be confounded with the other son Alfrid or Alchfrid, who was the friend of Wilfrid's youth. Lappenberg, vol. i. p. 187, note.

On the occasion of this second exile Wilfrid found an asylum in the dominions of Ethelred king of Mercia, who bestowed upon him the bishopric of Lichfield, which he appears to have held for several years. At length, A. D. 702, Berthwald convened a synod of bishops at Nestrefield near Ripon, at which Wilfrid was invited to appear, with an assurance of safety to his person. Several charges were made against him, but the chief point urged was, that he should submit to the orders made by Archbishop Theodore with respect to the division of his diocese. To this Wilfrid replied by alleging his willingness to submit to whatever Theodore had done lawfully and according to the canons, at the same time retorting upon his opponents their resistance to the authority of the see of Rome during two and twenty years. After much wrangling and contention, the synod passed sentence on him that he should be deprived of all his ecclesiastical benefices both in Northumbria and Mercia. This, however, they were persuaded to soften so far as to allow him to retain the monastery of Ripon, on condition of his agreeing not to stir out of its precincts without the king's leave, and to abstain from all episcopal functions. These terms he indignantly rejected, and after referring to his own labours in teaching his countrymen the canonical observance of Easter, the Roman chant and tonsure, and the Rule of Benedict, concluded with announcing his intention of again appealing to Rome. The synod next proceeded to excommunicate Wilfrid's adherents; a measure which was carried into effect with the utmost rigour in Northumbria, although the King of Mercia still remained his friend. Wilfrid, after this, notwithstanding his advanced age, set off once more on a journey on foot to Rome, and in person appealed to the Pope. On the other hand, Berthwald sent his agents to the Papal See to justify the proceedings of the English bishops, and to maintain that Wilfrid had been guilty of contumacy, in rejecting the orders of his metropolitan, and refusing to be bound by the decision of a synod. Wilfrid rejoined that he had not refused obedience .to his metropolitan, so far as his orders were agreeable to the canons, and to the decrees of the See of Rome. This line of defence was, of course, extremely acceptable to the Pope, John VI., and the synod of Roman bishops to whom he referred the case. The cause, however, was fully heard, and occupied the synod for some months. At the end of that time they unanimously acquitted Wilfrid of all the charges brought against him. The Pope also addressed letters to the Kings of Northumbria and Mercia, in which he asserted the authority of his see in high terms. He directed Berthwald to call another synod, to which Bosa and John should be summoned with Wilfrid, and ordered that, if that assembly could not come to a satisfactory arrangement of the dispute between the parties, then the cause should be sent back to Rome for final determination, adding that if any English prelate refused to appear before the Apostolic See, he should forfeit the dignity of his order.

With this second most peremptory decision in his favour, Wilfrid once more set off for England. The fatigue of the journey to so old a man brought on a severe illness at Meaux, in France, which nearly proved fatal, but from which he recovered sufficiently to accomplish his return in safety. He was favourably received in the kingdom of Mercia by Coenred, the successor of his friend Ethelred, who had now resigned his throne to become a monk; but Aldfrid refused to hold any correspondence with a person whose cause had already been determined by a national synod. Soon after this

Aldfrid died, having (it is said) in his last hours expressed to his sister, the abbess Ealfleda, his regret on account of his conduct to Wilfrid. Nothing was done to promote Wilfrid's restoration during the short reign that followed; but after the accession of Osred, the son of Aldfrid, to the Northumbrian throne, Berthwald, in the year 705, summoned another synod, which met near the river Nidd, in Yorkshire, to consider his case. On this occasion the Archbishop took Wilfrid's part, and urged compliance with the Papal decree. The Northern bishops were still disposed to resist; but the abbess Ealfleda having testified to her brother Aldfrid's dying wishes for reconciliation with Wilfrid, and Wilfrid himself being ready to resign all pretensions to the sees of York and Lindisfarne, all things seemed to tend towards a compromise. After much debate, therefore, it was finally agreed that Eadbert should remain at Lindisfarne, that John Bishop of Hexham should succeed to the see of York (which was then vacant, or about to become vacant, by the death of Bosa), while Wilfrid succeeded John in the abbey and bishopric of Hexham, and was also reinstated in the possession of his monastery at Ripon.

Four years after this compromise, A. D. 709, Wilfrid died at the advanced age of seventy-six, at one of his monasteries at Oundle in Northamptonshire, from which his remanis were removed to Ripon for interment.

Notwithstanding his strong bias towards Rome (which appears to have been the great leading principle of his life), he was a man much to be honoured for his untiring zeal, dauntless energy, devotion to the work of his office, as well as for his patience and fortitude under a most undeserved and unjustifiable persecution. Whether his zealous advocacy of the Papal supremacy in England has on the whole been serviceable to the cause to which he so constantly devoted himself, may reasonably be questioned. Although the effects of his energy and perseverance in maintaining the

Papal authority, left a permanent impression on his native country, it cannot be denied, that on two remarkable occasions he was fated to give proofs, that the thunders of Papal anathemas were as yet comparatively powerless against the stubborn independence of the English prelates and princes of the seventh century.[1]

The period of Theodore's primacy was one of eventful importance in the history of the Church of England. Under him the work of Gregory's mission was completed by the conversion of Sussex and the Isle of Wight; and under him the Church became for the first time a regular organised body. It is true, indeed, that a more decided inclination to Romish usages, and a more servile submission to Rome, began now to be shown among the clergy, partly, no doubt, from the departure of the Scots, who had been the sturdy champions of national independence, partly from the natural tendency of Theodore to exalt the power to which he owed his own elevation, partly from the earnest zeal and influence of the learned men who accompanied him, and more than all, perhaps, from the devotion and active partisanship of Wilfrid. Still the clergy, though Romanising in tendency, were not as yet mere tools of Rome. The canons of the synod of Hertford, which we have mentioned above, are in perfect accordance with those of the Universal Church, and show no signs of subjection to Rome. The same may be said of the canons made at another synod of Theodore's, held at Hatfield, in Hertfordshire, A. D. 680, although he paid too much deference to the Pope in calling this synod in obedience to his orders. The professed object of the synod of Hatfield was to ascertain whether the English clergy were sound in the orthodox faith, which had lately been assailed by the heresy of the Monothelites. The clergy present at this declared their adhesion to the decrees of the first five general councils, including that at Constantinople, held A. D. 553, against certain errors of Origen, and also to those of a recent synod held by Pope Martin at Rome against the Monothelites. Among the persons present at the Council of Hatfield was a learned Italian divine of the name of John, Precentor of the Church of St. Peter's, and Abbot of the Monastery of St. Martin's in Rome. He had been sent by Pope Agatho to teach singing to the monks of Benedict Biscop's monastery at Wearmouth, and had been directed at the same time carefully to inform himself and report to the Pope concerning the faith of the English Church. He brought with him a copy of the decrees of Pope Martin's council, which he produced at the synod of Hatfield, and received in return a copy of the acts of that Council to carry back to the Pope. This journey, however, he was prevented by death from accomplishing.

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[1] Lingard, vol. i. pp. 132—145.; Life of Wilfrid in the Lives of the English Saints; Collier's Eccles. Hist., vol. i. pp. 273—282 (8vo ed. 1840).

We have before referred to Theodore's labours for the diffusion of learning in England. He was himself so distinguished as a man of letters, as to be described by Pope Agatho, in a synodical letter to the Emperor, by the honourable title of "Philosopher." His great work was his "Penitential," a manual of religious discipline, of which we shall have occasion to speak more hereafter. To Theodore, also, has been generally ascribed the commencement of that institution, for which every succeeding generation of Englishmen has had such cause to be thankful, viz., the division of the country into parishes. There seems to be no doubt of the existence of something very like parishes, as well as of lay patronage of churches, in Theodore's time[1]; and there are even traces of parishes at an earlier period, if we consider Bishop Cedd's churches, mentioned by Bede, to have been of a parochial nature, *i. e.* to have had districts belonging to them, within which the priests of the churches exercised the cure of souls. Moreover, the same venerable historian speaks of John of Hexham being called to consecrate churches built by noblemen.

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[1] See his Capitula, in Thorpe's Ancient Laws, vol. ii. p. 73.; and Kemble, vol. ii. p. 421.

Whatever other changes Theodore may have introduced, there can be no doubt that a considerable part of the diocesan division of England dates from his time. In the latter part of the seventh century, the diocese of Lichfield, which was before coextensive with the kingdom of the Mercians, was divided into five sees, Lichfield, Leicester, Sidnacester in Lindsey, Worcester, and Hereford. The kingdom of Kent contained, as at first, two dioceses, Canterbury and Rochester, while that of London sufficed for the petty kingdom of Essex. East Anglia had hitherto only possessed one see at Dunwich; Theodore added another at Elmham, which was transferred to Thetford in the 11th century, and afterwards to Norwich.[1] In Theodore's time the see of Winchester comprehended both the kingdoms of Wessex and Sussex. On the death of Hedda in 705 it was divided, and the new see of Sherborne created, which comprised the Saxon territory to the west of Hampshire. About the same time an episcopal see was fixed at Selsey for Sussex, which in Norman times was removed to Chichester. From the end of the 7th century to the time when the Danish invasions threw the ecclesiastical institutions of the country into confusion, the present province of Canterbury comprehended the following twelve sees,—Lichfield, Leicester, Sidnacester, Worcester, Hereford, Sherborne, Winchester, Elmham, Dunwich, London, Rochester, Selsey. The kingdom of Northumbria was, from the time of Paulinus's flight until A.D. 735, when Bishop Egbert of York received the pall, subject to the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and at first only contained one see of Lindisfarne, which Wilfrid removed to York. We have seen that Theodore divided this see into three,—York, Hexham with Lindisfarne, and one for the conquered country of Lindsey. He afterwards carried this division still farther, by separating Hexham from Lindisfarne, and establishing a new see of Whitherne in Galloway, for the Pictish territory belonging to the kingdom of Northumbria. Moreover Edhed, bishop of the province of Lindsey, retired from that country when it was recovered by the Mercians, and was made bishop of Ripon.[1] These arrangements, however, were not destined to be of long duration. The see of Whitherne was severed from the kingdom of Northumbria by the end of the 8th century; Hexham and its neighbourhood were in the 9th century utterly depopulated by the Danes. Edhed appears to have been the first and only occupant of the see of Ripon, until the happy restoration of that see in the 19th century. There remained then, after a time, only one suffragan of the province of York, the bishop of Lindisfarne, whose see was, after some other changes, finally fixed at Durham, A.D. 995. The province of Canterbury was also destined to go through some changes before the end of the Anglo-Saxon period. The bishoprics of Leicester, Sidnacester, and Dunwich ceased to exist about the close of the 9th century. In the 10th century the see of Dorchester in Oxfordshire was formed out of the old sees of Sidnacester and Leicester, and was afterwards transferred to Lincoln. About the same time the see of Sherborne was divided into four sees, viz., Sherborne, Wells, Crediton, and St. Germains in Cornwall. These two last were afterwards united in one see, of Crediton, which was removed to Exeter just before the Conquest. Sherborne also appears to have been removed to Wilton, and afterwards to Salisbury.

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[1] Bede, lib. iv. cap. 5.; William of Malmsbury's Chronicle of the Kings of England, lib. i. cap. 6., and lib. iii.

If Theodore's primacy was one of great importance in the history of the Church of England, that of Berthwald, his successor, was by no means undistinguished by events of much interest to the student of ecclesiastical history.

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[1] Bede, lib. iv. cap. 12., and Dr. Giles's note.

The laws of king Ine, of Wessex, belong to this period, and show a disposition on the part of the legislature to attempt to enforce the observance of Christianity by penal sanctions. In case of an omission to bring a child to be baptized within thirty days after its birth, the priest was liable to a penalty of thirty shillings, and if the child died unbaptized, he was declared to be answerable, on account of its so dying, to the extent of all that he possessed.[1] If a bondman worked on Sunday by his lord's command, he was declared to be free, and his master was liable to a penalty besides. If he worked without his lord's knowledge, he was to suffer corporal punishment. If the freeman worked on that day without his lord's command, he forfeited his freedom or sixty shillings. The right of sanctuary is acknowledged by these laws, and in them also is found the earliest provision for the compulsory payment of the ecclesiastical tax, which is so often mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon laws, called Kirk-shot. This appears to have been a payment of a certain quantity of corn or other seeds to the Church, by way of first fruits. It seems to have been originally a recognitory rent paid to the lord, by the tenants of church lands, so much corn for example from each hide of land. Afterwards it was claimed from all men alike, so much from every hearth, until the time of the Conquest, when it ceased to be generally paid.[2]

Another remarkable provision of king Ine's laws is, that they recognise the sanctity of spiritual relationships by extending that principle of Anglo-Saxon law, which required a compensation for blood to be paid to the kindred of a person slain, so far as to permit a godfather to claim compensation for the murder of a godson, and a godson for that of a godfather.

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[1] Thorpe, vol. i. p. 103.; Johnson's Canons, vol. i. p. 132. Johnson supposes the penalty to attach to the parents, Mr. Thorpe to the priest.

[2] Kemble, vol. ii. pp. 490--493, and App. D.; Thorpe, vol. i. p. 104, note. Some writers have supposed this payment to be the origin of our modern church-rates, but there seems no resemblance between them beyond the name. Mr. Kemble considers that church-rates arose long after the Conquest. See, however, Cnut's Laws, p. 66.; Thorpe, vol. i. p. 411.

The laws of Wihtred, king of Kent, made at Bapchild and Berham or Berstead in Kent, during the primacy of Berthwald, contain also some important ecclesiastical provisions. The laws of Bapchild confirm the grants of lands made to the Church in former days, and declare that no layman ought to intrude into the churches, or any of the possessions belonging to them. They also give the archbishop the right of choosing bishops, abbots and abbesses; but it may be questioned whether this privilege was ever exercised, except to a very limited extent. The laws of Berstead also give to church lands the privilege of freedom from secular imposts. They impose penalties on immorality and on the violation of the Sabbath, and allow a priest and deacon to clear themselves of a charge by a solemn affirmation before the altar, while they declare the word of a bishop to be incontrovertible without an oath.

CHAP. VI.

HISTORY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH IN ENGLAND, WITH REFERENCE TO TERRITORIAL DIVISIONS, ENDOWMENTS, AND CONNEXION WITH THE STATE; WITH A PRELIMINARY SKETCH OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE MONASTIC ORDERS.

The laws mentioned in the last chapter distinctly recognise the clergy and monks as possessing property in land, as well as peculiar rights, privileges, and immunities. The laws of Ethelbert, mentioned above, show that the temporal endowments of the clergy commenced almost with the first introduction of Christianity into Saxon England. It seems proper that we should now proceed to give some account of the settlement of these orders of men in the country, the appropriation of peculiar districts for their spheres of labour, their temporal endowments, and their relation to the state and its rulers. What is commonly called Church property, may be said to date from the 7th century, deriving its origin, not from any definite legislation on the part of the State in favour of the Church, but partly from the piety, or in many instances the superstition, of individual princes or nobles, partly, as in the case of tithes, from religious practices which were in process of time established and guarded by legal sanctions.

When we speak of the clergy, we refer to those three orders of ministers, which the Church of England, both before and since the Reformation, has recognised as deriving their origin from Apostolic times[1], and as having the exclusive privilege of the ministry of God's Holy Word and Sacraments; viz. bishops, presbyters or priests, and deacons. Some ecclesiastical writers have treated bishops and presbyters as being of one and the same order, but differing in power and jurisdiction, and this appears to have been the view of the Anglo-Saxon Church, which however, in common with the rest of the Catholic Church, regarded the power of ordination, the duty of confirming the baptized, as well as that of consecrating churches, as peculiar to the office of the bishop.[1]

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[1] Preface to the Ordinal of the United Church of England and Ireland.

Other offices were added to the Church in the 3rd century, as those of subdeacons, readers, acolyths, exorcists, doorkeepers, all of which were at the time of Augustine's mission considered as clerical and requiring the imposition of episcopal hands, for their lawful exercise, but the Reformed Church acting on a wiser principle, has either bestowed these offices upon laymen, or abolished them altogether. These, however, demand no more than a passing notice; and of the higher orders of the clergy we shall have to speak hereafter. But there is one body of men, the monks, who, though not in strictness of language belonging to the clergy, and often opposed to the clergy, yet occupy so prominent a place in the religious history of the times of which we write, and who exercised such a powerful influence upon the religious world for many centuries before the Reformation, that it is impossible to understand anything of the ecclesiastical affairs of those ages, without a knowledge of their history and institutions. Before, therefore, I give a sketch of the temporal establishment of the Church of England in the 7th century, it seems proper to give some account of the rise of the monastic system in the centuries preceding.[2]

We read of persons in the earlier ages of the Church, who were called Ascetics (Ασκηταὶ) from their exercising themselves in bodily mortifications, in intense devotion to prayer, in works of charity, and abstinence from the pleasures and comforts of life. Of the monastic life however, properly so called, there appear no traces before the middle of the 3rd century. At that time the fury of the great persecution of the Christians, under the Emperor Decius, drove many persons in Egypt into deserts and mountain solitudes, or other inaccessible places, where they found not only a safe retreat, but also convenient opportunities for devoting themselves to a life of religious seclusion and pious contemplation. What was first forced upon them by necessity became, after the persecution ended, a matter of choice, and they were unwilling to quit those huts or cells, which they had made their homes in the wilderness. These persons were literally hermits or anchorets, ἀναχωρηταὶ (*i.e.* retreating from the world), who professed to love and court a solitude, unbroken except by the occasional intrusion of the inhabitants of the neighbouring country. Their numbers were farther increased, at the latter end of the century, by the severities of Diocletian, as well as by the admiration which their reputation for piety began by degrees to attract.

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[1] Ælfric's Canons, xvii.; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 349.

[2] The word μοναχὸς or μοναστὴς, signifies solitary. Hence μοναστήριον the abode of the solitary

It was not, however, till the time of Constantine, that these solitary recluses began to abandon their separate mode of living for dwellings in common. The author of this change (from which they acquired the name of Cœnobites or livers in common) is said to have been Antony (a contemporary and friend of the great Athanasius), who shares with another Egyptian, of the name of Pachomius, the honour of being the first founder of monastic societies.

The numbers of the Egyptian Cœnobites were considerable (although probably not so great as has been represented), and their several establishments varied from 100 to 5,000 inhabitants; the discipline to which they were subjected was rigid, but not of excessive or barbarous severity. The objects to which they devoted themselves were chiefly these four,—solitude, manual labour, fastings, and prayer. The first of these was not so strictly maintained, as to prevent them from uniting at stated times of the day in acts of social worship. The second, however, was followed with an assiduity which is worthy of remark. Having no possessions, and disdaining to beg, these Egyptian monks found manual labour, exerted in various trades, necessary for their bodily support. They seem also to have wisely deemed it essential for their spiritual health, in order to prevent the distraction of the mind, and to guard against those temptations with which the evil spirit assails the idle.

From Egypt the institution of monachism soon passed into Syria, where it was practised with increased mortifications, and from Syria it was transmitted to Pontus, where it found an earnest patron in a great Father of the Church, Basil, Archbishop of Cæsarea. Basil is said to have been the first who recommended (though he does not appear to have enforced), the obligation of vows upon those who embraced the monastic life. Neither did Basil stand alone among the great fathers of the 4th century, in his approbation of monachism. We find Athanasius, Chrysostom, Augustine, all lending the aid of their learning, eloquence, and piety to the support of an institution of which the first founders were humble and illiterate men. And if we feel disposed to wonder that such men should have condescended to show some patronage to superstition and fanaticism, we ought to reflect that there may have been sufficient causes in the circumstances of the times to justify those who were burning and shining lights of the Christian Church, in looking with some degree of favour upon the system. It was enough for them that it enjoined upon those who embraced it an entire separation from the corruptions of the world, to which Christianity was now more exposed, on account of its being the religion of the state. Moreover, in considering monachism in its first period of existence, we see it only as it was practised by men of African or Eastern origin, whose ardent temperaments and excitable imaginations were naturally more prone to acts of fanaticism and ascetic severities, and therefore cannot perhaps be judged with fairness by colder and more rational Europeans. In addition to this it should be recollected, that in its earlier period monachism was free from some of the abuses of later times. It was not a cloak for covetousness, when it had not yet become fashionable to enrich monasteries with the offerings of superstitious and wealthy devotees. Monks lived literally on the principle of the Apostle, that "if any would not work, neither should he eat;"[1] they were not yet bound by the unchristian vow of celibacy[2]; nay, even if they wished to return to the world which they had forsaken, no impassable barrier existed to forbid that return. The original monks, moreover, though in all cases subject to the bishop of the diocese, were laymen; although, sometimes, their president or abbot was a priest; and then, as in later times, the monasteries may have served as schools of training for candidates for holy orders. Although mention is made in earlier ecclesiastical history of virgins, who made a public profession of virginity, it does not appear that such females lived in communities, or upon their own labour. The first foundation of nunneries, or establishments for religious females, seems to have been contemporaneous with that of monks, and is also attributed to the Egyptian, Antony; but it does not appear, in those earlier times (at least in the East), to have been attended with the same success, as the institution of monks.

Towards the middle of the 4th century, the monastic system passed into the West of Europe, having been, as is supposed by some, introduced into Italy by Athanasius, during his stay at Rome, in 341. In Italy it found a patron in Ambrose, archbishop of Milan, and thence it extended itself to France, where Martin, bishop of Tours, laboured zealously for its diffusion. From Italy it is probable that it was introduced into Africa; and by the end of the 4th, or the beginning of the 5th century, the institution of monasteries prevailed everywhere, where the faith of Christ was received. About this time, also, the monastic rule began to be introduced among the clergy; so that in some cases the clergy and monks lived together under one code of laws, in others purely clerical monasteries were established, in which the bishop and his clergy lived together in common, under the monastic discipline. This change is generally attributed to Eusebius, bishop of Vercelli, but the same system appears to have been adopted by the celebrated Father of the Church, Augustine of Hippo.

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[1] 2 Thess. iii. 10.

[2] Athanasius speaks of married monks existing in his time. See the passage quoted by Bingham, lib. vii. cap. 2. § 6.

From the circumstance of the monastic system prevailing simultaneously with the incursion of the pagan invaders of the Roman Empire, Romish writers have regarded this institution in the light of a providential barrier, interposed to stay the progress of heathenism, and to prevent the utter extinction of Christianity in the West. If by this is merely meant that the union of men in societies, making especial profession of religion, was permitted by the providence of Almighty God, as one method among others, of preserving the knowledge of the gospel in the world, which seemed peculiarly suited to those times of confusion, there is, perhaps, nothing in the statement to which we ought to object. The display of the fruits of Christian piety and holiness in the lives of the earlier monks had, no doubt, a powerful influence in leading the barbarian conquerors of Western Europe to embrace the faith, and their zeal, as missionaries, was in numberless instances rewarded with success in bringing souls to Christ. But while we admit this, we must take care not to fall into the error of supposing monachism to be itself part of the original economy of the gospel, or lawfully deducible from it. A learned writer of our times[1] has observed, that monachism was not in fact an institution peculiar to Christianity, but that something like it existed both in Egypt and in Palestine, before the Christian faith appeared, and is to be found even in the religion of Buddhaism. Moreover he observes, that monachism "was at variance with the pure spirit of Christianity; inasmuch as it impelled men, instead of remaining as a salt to the corrupt world in which they lived, outwardly to withdraw from it, and to bury the talent, which otherwise they might have used for the benefit of the many." It is true, however, as he adds, that by "Christianity a new spirit was infused into this mode of life, whereby with many it became ennobled, and converted into an instrument of effecting much, which could not otherwise have been effected by any such mode of living." The prevailing form, which the piety of the more religious assumed for several centuries, was an outward renunciation of the world. Of these, some chose the life of the solitary, supposing it to be an angelical life; but it has been well observed that an angelical life is best described in the language of Archbishop Leighton, as "a life spent between ascending in prayer to fetch blessings from above, and descending to scatter them among men."[2] In this last part, the life of a solitary is undoubtedly deficient, and the same is true, though not altogether to the same extent, of the life of the monk. The system of monachism, considered as a system of forced separation by vows from the world, seems at variance with the social spirit of the gospel, which bids us not "to live to ourselves," but "to do good to all men," which exhorts us to "use the world as not ~~abusing it,~~" but does not command us to go out of it altogether. Moreover, there is this mistake, which lies at the bottom of every system of

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[1] Neander's History of the Church (Bohn's ed.), vol. iii. p. 323.

[2] Churton's Early English Church, p. 140.

asceticism, and which the monkish lives and histories of the middle ages most abundantly show to be a fundamental principle of the monastic life, viz., that the body is treated as an enemy which is to be crushed, instead of being trained into subjection, to be the servant of the spirit. Hence those macerations and castigations of the body, which monkish ingenuity has devised for the mortification of the fleshly nature, and which, after all, are only contrivances for the glorification of self, under another and more subtle form. They are part of a degrading superstition, which refuses to acknowledge the body as an instrument whereby man may be enabled to glorify God, and to fulfil His laws. And the consequences of the attempt so to violate the law of man's being, and to trample upon the natural feelings, which his Creator has implanted in him for wise and noble purposes, have been in some instances most fearful. Early monastic history records frequent cases of insanity, terminating in suicide, resulting from excess of asceticism. Sometimes a frightful reaction took place, and those who thought they had obtained a complete mastery over their passions, plunged into the opposite extreme of the grossest sensuality. A sect of fanatics, called Euchites, who spread over Syria and Mesopotamia, from the second half of the 4th to the 6th century, and whose religion was a sort of pantheistic mysticism, took its origin from certain monks, who fancied themselves to have attained the height of ascetic perfection. They professed to live a purely contemplative life of inward prayer, refused manual labour, and lived by alms, being, in fact, the first mendicant friars.[1]

For the correction of these fanatical excesses in those who embraced the monastic life, it became necessary to introduce a system of order, strict discipline, and subjection of individuals to the will of the whole community. Basil of Cæsarea clearly perceived the deficiencies of the solitary mode of life, and the superiority of that of the Cœnobites, as a means of training to Christianity, and as more likely to preserve the members of the body in a right relation to their divine Head. He imposed a rule upon the monasteries of his diocese, which was long observed in the West also, but which was afterwards superseded in that quarter by the celebrated Rule of Benedict. This Rule, which was destined to give a new form and spirit to the whole system of monachism, was based on the fundamental principle of the complete subjection of individuals to the will of the superior. Its author was a hermit of Nursia in Italy, who lived at the beginning of the 6th century. His first settlement, at Subiaco, forty miles from Rome, consisted of twelve monasteries, each containing twelve monks; he afterwards established another monastery at Monte Cassino, from which the order spread with such success into other countries, that for 600 years the greatest part of the European monks were (though not all under the same name), followers of the Benedictine Rule.

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[1] Neander, vol. iii. pp. 337—346.

According to what he enjoined, the monks were to rise at two o'clock A.M. in winter, and in summer at such hours as the abbot might direct, repair to the place of worship for vigils, and then spend the remainder of the night in learning psalms by heart, in private meditation, and reading. At sunrise they assembled for matins; then spent four hours in labour, then two hours in reading, then dined and read in private till half-past two P.M., when they met again for worship, and afterwards laboured till their vespers. In their vigils and matins, twenty-four psalms were to be chanted each day, so as to complete the psalter every week.

Seven hours each day were devoted to labour, two at least to private study, one to private meditation, the rest to social worship, meals, sleep, and refreshment. The labour consisted in gardening, agriculture, and the exercise of various mechanical trades, the regulation of which was entrusted to the absolute control of the superior. They ate twice a day at a common table, first about noon, and then in the evening. Both the quantity and the quality of their food was limited. On the public table no meat was permitted, but always two kinds of porridge. The prohibition of flesh was, however, relaxed in favour of children, the sick, and the aged. Wine in small quantities was allowed at all times; and in case of extraordinary labour in the field, or in any particular trade, the allowance both of food and drink might be increased at the discretion of the abbot. Conversation at table during meals was prohibited, but some of the body read aloud to the rest. They all served as cooks and waiters by turns. Their clothing was simple and coarse, regulated by the abbot; each being provided with two suits, a knife, a needle and other necessaries.

They slept in common dormitories for ten or twenty persons, in separate beds, without undressing, and had a light burning, and an inspector sleeping in each dormitory. They were allowed no conversation after they retired, nor at any time were they permitted to jest or talk for mere amusement. No one might receive a present of any kind, not even from a parent, nor have any correspondence with persons without the monastery, except under the inspection of the abbot. A porter always sat at the gate, which was kept locked day and night, and no stranger was admitted without leave from the abbot, nor could any monk go out without his permission. The abbot was elected by the common suffrage of the brotherhood; his power was in all things despotic, and he could remove his under-officers, of whom there were several, at pleasure. On great emergencies he summoned the whole brotherhood, but more commonly only the seniors, to meet in council, but he was not obliged to follow their advice. For admission to the society, a probation of twelve months, attended at the first with measures of some severity and harshness, was required;

during which time the applicant was fed and clothed, and employed in the meaner offices of the house, and closely watched. At the end of his probation, if approved, he took solemn and irrevocable vows of perfect chastity, absolute poverty, and implicit obedience to his superiors in everything. If he had property, he must give it all away, either to his friends, or the poor, or the monastery; nor was he allowed ever afterwards to possess the least particle of private property, or claim any personal rights or liberties. For lighter offences a reprimand was to be administered by an inferior officer. For greater offences, after two admonitions, the culprit was deprived of his privileges, and not allowed to read in his turn, or to sit at the common table, or enjoy his small allowance of comforts. Still the severity, necessary for the enforcement of discipline, was always to be tempered with the spirit of love. Much was left to the prudence, as well as to the merciful consideration, of the superior. He was to keep his own fallibility fixed before his eyes, and to be careful not to break the bruised reed. If all other means of bringing the offender to his right mind failed, the last resource was expulsion from the monastery. Even then he might be restored on repentance. Three times might this indulgence be granted to an erring brother, but after a fourth relapse his expulsion was final.[1]

Such were the main features of the Rule of Benedict, whose Order in the ninth century prevailed over all other monastic societies in the West. The rule of Columbanus, of which we have spoken before, was later in time, as well as more strict and severe in its discipline, but had a much less permanent sway; the monasteries, which at first followed Columbanus, having afterwards yielded to the milder discipline of Benedict.

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[1] See note to Mosheim's Eccles. Hist., by Soames, vol. ii. p. 22.; Lingard, vol. i. pp. 202—205.; Neander, vol. iii. pp. 370—375.

The institution of Benedict introduced at once this change into the monastic system, that the monks could no longer alter at pleasure the regulations of their founders. When the period of noviciate was over, the person who was to be admitted into the Order, bound himself irrevocably, by an instrument in writing, to remain in the monastery, and to observe the rule of the founder.

In one respect, however, the strict observance of the Benedictine Rule was either never enforced, or relaxed at a very early period in the history of the Order. Their monasteries became endowed with extensive estates, and their revenues were continually augmented by piety or superstition. In order to reconcile this state of things with the vow of absolute poverty, it was necessary to have recourse to an ingenious distinction. Monastic poverty was interpreted to mean the abdication of private property by each individual member of the society, although the community to which he belonged might abound in all riches. It is said that, wherever the original rule was faithfully observed, the acquisition of property by the monastery made no alteration in the habits of individual monks, the additional wealth being employed in those objects of public benefit for which the Benedictines have been justly celebrated, as the building and ornamenting of churches, the acquisition of manuscripts for their libraries, and the general promotion of learning and the fine arts.

We have already had occasion to refer, in the case of Theodore and his companions, to the important assistance rendered by members of the monastic order in promoting the work of Christianity and civilisation in England. We cannot in fairness deny a similar meed of praise to the labours of Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop, the first[1] who introduced the Benedictine system into England. These and many other similar instances show that, however open to objection the system of monachism may be, its working has been graciously overruled by an allwise Providence to the production of as much of moral good as could be expected to arise in the times of confusion and darkness which ensued upon the breaking up of the Roman Empire. Neither can we deny the truth of the observation of the modern Romish historian with respect to our own countrymen, "that the Anglo-Saxon cœnobites were, many of them, men who had abandoned the world from the purest motives, and whose chief solicitude was to practise the duties of their profession."[1]

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[1] It appears that Biscop's foundations were not exclusively Benedictine, but partly subject to rules of the founder's own invention. Lingard, vol. i. p. 208.

The close connection of the author and first preachers of the mission to Saxon England with the monastic system, caused its establishment in that country to be almost contemporaneous with the conversion of the people. Gregory the Great was, before his advancement to the Popedom, the founder of seven monasteries. In one of these he lived as a private monk, under the jurisdiction of the abbot, and from these the missionaries whom he sent to England were taken. Whether these monks adopted the rule of Benedict or not, has been questioned[2]; it seems more probable that they lived under a code of laws framed by Gregory himself. However this may have been, the missionaries, on their arrival in England, adopted the cœnobitical life to which, as monks, they had been habituated. Thus we find Augustine living with his monks at Christchurch, Canterbury, while another monastic settlement, the monastery of St. Peter and St. Paul, was formed without the walls of the city, and was richly endowed by king Ethelbert. This was the commencement of the endowment of the Church in England with lands.

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[1] Lingard, vol. i. p. 227.

[2] Ibid. p. 151. note.

What happened in Kent may be considered as a specimen of the general process which took place in a newly converted district, for the establishment of the Church upon a permanent footing. The bishop of the diocese was a sort of head missionary, who fixed himself in a central station, probably in the vicinity of the court, as in the conversion of the different Anglo-Saxon states the princes generally led the way. From this point he and his clergy could conveniently visit the country places in the neighbourhood for the purposes of preaching, baptizing, and ministering to the sick. Thus we are told by Bede that Chad, after his consecration, went about, after the manner of the Apostles, on foot, to preach the gospel in towns, in the open country, in cottages, villages, and castles. In like manner Cuthbert, who was made bishop of Lindisfarne, A.D. 685, went out of his monastery, sometimes on horseback, but oftener on foot, to preach in the neighbouring towns and villages. His favourite practice was to resort to hamlets situated in wild mountainous districts, inaccessible to ordinary teachers, where he used to stay several weeks instructing the rude people by his preaching and example.

In the monastery at the central station the clergy lived together in common with the monks, although not necessarily members of the monastic order. Those who were not monks were distinguished by the name of canons, because they lived under a rule.

This state of things, however, was obviously only suited to a district at the first introduction of Christianity into it. Both for the further spread of the faith, and in order to keep those who were already converted steadfast, it was equally necessary that more centres of instruction should be established in various places. This had led in France to the appointment of single presbyters to reside in separate districts under the general superintendence of the bishop, or, in some

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[1] Bede, lib. iii. cap. 28.; lib. iv. cap. 27.; Kemble, vol. ii. p. 415.

cases, to the settlement of several presbyters, under an officer called an archpresbyter, supposed by some to be the same as the rural dean of after times.[1] The term parish, which had originally been applied to the district within which the bishop exercised his functions, came in process of time to denote the smaller circle of the presbyters. This was one step in the process of the division of the country into what we now call parishes. Another was the encouragement of the building and endowment of churches by private landowners for the use of their families and dependants. It became early a custom in France, that the right of patronage (*i. e.* of the appointment of the minister to serve in such churches) should be relinquished, under certain conditions, to the founder, the bishops reserving to themselves the canonical obedience and ordination of the presbyter so nominated.[2] Customs which had been found beneficial in France were likely soon to be adopted in Christian England. We have before alluded to the supposition, that archbishop Theodore was the author of these changes; and whether he introduced them or not, his Capitula seem to recognise the existence of parish churches, as well as of the right of lay patronage. The following directions are an evidence of this. "Any presbyter, who shall have obtained a church by means of a price, is absolutely to be deposed, seeing that he is known to hold it contrary to ecclesiastical rule. And likewise, he who shall by means of money have expelled a presbyter lawfully ordained to a church, and so have obtained it entirely to himself; which vice, so widely diffused, is to be remedied with the utmost zeal. Also it is to be forbidden, both to clerks and laymen, that no one shall presume to give any church whatever to a presbyter without the license and consent of the bishop."[1] At that period tithes were not yet payable by law, and the clergy had to depend for the most part on the voluntary offerings of the faithful. The precarious nature of this mode of subsistence rendered it necessary for the bishops to insist on some endowment of land accompanying the foundation of a church. The amount of this endowment was, by a constitution of archbishop Egbert's, in the 8th century, fixed to be at least one manse or hide of glebe land for each church[2]; and it appears that this glebe land, when once annexed to a particular church, could not afterwards be alienated from it, even by the bishop. Egbert's canon also provided that the grant of glebe to a church should be accompanied with an immunity from the burdens to which lands in lay hands were liable. This, however, must be understood with some reservation, as applying only to the numerous petty claims of the king and his officers, of which frequent mention is made in Anglo-Saxon charters. There can be no doubt that church lands were not exempt from what was called the three-fold necessity, *i. e.* the duty of contribution for the repair of public fortresses, for the expense of military levies, and for that of public roads and bridges.[3]

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[1] Dansey's Horæ Decanicæ Rurales, vol. i. pp. 14—18.

[2] Kemble, vol. ii. p. 420. This was in accordance with a law of the Emperor Justinian, Nov. 123. cap. 18. "If any one erect a church, and wish that he himself or his heirs should appoint the clerks, if they furnish a living for the clerks and name proper ones, they shall constitute those persons clerks whom they shall name." Burn's Eccles. Law, vol. i. p. 6.

Moreover, there seems good ground for supposing that the early Anglo-Saxon missionary bishops converted the old heathen temples in the outlying country places into Christian churches, to which appropriate districts were in the course of time assigned. According to this view we may fairly conclude that, by the end of the 7th century, the ecclesiastical machinery of England consisted partly of cathedral churches, served by a body of clerks and monks, who were sometimes united under the same rule, and a sufficient number of whom were admitted to the orders of deacon and priest; partly of churches served by presbyters under an archpresbyter; and partly of parish churches, established on the sites of the ancient heathen temples, or erected elsewhere by the liberality of kings, bishops, and other landowners.[1]

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[1] Theodore's Capitula, Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 73. The 9th canon of Cloveshoo, A. D. 747, speaks of districts assigned to priests by the bishops, *i. e.* parishes. Johnson's Canons, vol. i. p. 247.

[2] Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 100. The hide, called also, in Latin, mansa, was the estate of one household, the amount of land sufficient for the support of one family. Mr. Kemble calculates it to have contained from 30 to 33 acres; vol. i. pp. 92, 109.

[3] Lingard, vol. i. pp. 241—245.; Kemble, vol. ii. p. 436.

The consecration of a church did not, in those times, operate so as to deprive the founder of the right of ownership. He might, and frequently did, appropriate it to a bishop or a monastery, but, in default of such appropriation, the ownership remained in him, subject to the life-interest of the incumbent serving the church. He might sell, give, or bequeath it by will, of which transactions we have evidence in the Anglo-Saxon charters preserved to our own times. In the ancient record of the survey of lands made after the Norman Conquest, known by the name of Domesday, there are entries which show that the lords of manors and other owners of churches derived an annual rent from them. The same record shows instances, not only of sales of churches, but of appropriation of their revenues by laymen, who probably bestowed only a small part of them on the minister; as also of churches being held in shares by several persons. Thus early was the commencement in England of that great abuse of the appropriation of Church revenues for other than spiritual purposes, which in after times led to evils of serious magnitude.[2]

The income provided for the support of the clergy was derived partly from the produce of the glebe lands, but chiefly from other sources. During the first four hundred years of the Christian Church, the principal fund available for this purpose was derived from the voluntary oblations of the faithful. These were given, first weekly, then monthly; and officers were appointed to dispose of them in the support of public worship, the maintenance of the clergy and that of the poorer brethren, the widows and orphans, as well as for the relief of those who were condemned to prison, or banishment, or to work in the mines. So it was in Tertullian's time, about the beginning of the 3d century, after which it is supposed that lands began to be given for the use of the Church, the profits of which were applied in payment of the clergy.[1] In process of time the analogy of the Levitical law introduced the custom of rendering the tithe of increase to the clergy ; but some centuries elapsed before the custom was established by legislative enactments. The Capitula of archbishop Theodore recognise the practice as existing in England in the 7th century ; the Excerptions of archbishop Egbert, in the 8th century, strongly insist on the payment of tithes as a religious duty, and enjoin a threefold division of them, viz., one part for the ornament of the churches, one for the poor and the stranger, and the third for the clergy.[2]

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[1] Kemble, vol. ii. p. 426.

[2] Lingard, vol. i. pp. 192—195., and Appendix I., p. 400.

This principle of division with respect to oblations seems to have prevailed in England from the first. Although the Roman custom generally was to divide the oblations into four parts, of which one part went to the support of the bishop, Gregory directed Augustine to make a threefold division only, on the express ground that he, being a monk, had no occasion for a separate portion. Whichever division, however, prevailed, the control of the whole fund seems to have been in a great measure left to the bishop, so that sometimes complaints were made of the inferior clergy, the churches, and the poor being defrauded of their respective shares.[3] The first legislative enactment that was made in France, A. D. 779, for the enforcement of tithes, directed that the distribution of them should be left to the discretion of the bishop. By what steps the transition was made in England from a voluntary offering of tithes, enforced only as a matter of obligation on the conscience, subject to the general control of the bishop, to an impost enforced by law and payable to the ministers of certain churches or parishes, it seems impossible now to ascertain. The first legislative enactment on the subject is a law of king Athelstan, of the early part of the 10th century, enjoining the payment of tithes from the king's lands, and from those of the bishops and ealdormen, or great nobles of the state. A law of king Edgar, in the middle of the same century, regulates the distribution of the tithes as follows: "Let ~~every tithe be paid~~ to the old minster to which the district belongs; but if ~~there be~~ any thane who on his bookland[1] has a church at which there is a burial-place, let him give the third part of his own tithe to his church. If any one have a church at which there is not a burial-place, then of the nine parts let him give his ~~priest~~ what he will." There was also a provision in Edgar's law, in case of non-payment of tithe, for the recovery of the tenth part by the church to which it was due, and for the forfeiture of eight of the remaining nine parts to the bishop and landlord, by way of punishing the defaulter. Similar laws were enacted under other kings with respect both to tithes and the payment of kirkshot, of which mention has been made before, and which was payable also to the old minster; and in 1013, the threefold division was sanctioned by an express law of king Ethelred.[2]

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[1] Selden on Tithes, quoted by Kemble, vol. ii. pp. 470, 471.

[2] Capitula Theodori, Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 65.; Excerpt. Egbert, Thorpe, vol. ii. pp. 98. 100. 111, 112.; see, also, Elfric's Canons, xxiv., Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 353.

[3] Kemble, vol. ii. pp. 430, 431. 479. note.

Besides tithes and kirkshot, there were three other payments to the Church, which in process of time were legalised by authority, viz., 1. Plough-alms, an offering of a penny from every plough-land to God, offered during the fortnight after Easter, by way of asking a blessing on the labours of the husbandman. 2. Lightshot, a payment of a certain quantity of wax from every hide of land, payable three times in the year, to procure lights for the altar. 3. Soubshot, a payment like that which was afterwards called a mortuary, being a fixed sum ordered to be paid for a dead person, while the grave was yet open to receive him, and made payable to the church to which the deceased belonged, if he were buried elsewhere.[1]

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[1] Bookland, or bocland, was the private property of the individual as distinguished from folcland, the property of the state, so called because always given by book or charter. Kemble, vol. i. pp. 298—301.

[2] Kemble, vol. ii. p. 476. and Appendix B.; Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 195. 262. 336. 338. 342. 366.

But our Anglo-Saxon ancestors were not content with providing a sufficient maintenance for their clergy; they gave them rank and privilege as members of the state. Thus, the office of a bishop was not only esteemed highly in England (as in all other Christian countries), on account of its spiritual character, but those who held it shared the privileges and duties of the highest secular nobles. The bishops were from an early period important officers of state. They were leading members of the Witenagemot, the Anglo-Saxon Parliament, so that the practice of our prelates sitting in the House of Lords is a part of the British constitution, as ancient as the monarchy itself. It was, moreover, part of their duty to assist in the administration of justice between man and man, as assessors to the ealdorman in the county court; and thus they had frequent opportunities of tempering the severity of their rude colleagues, by the application of the Godlike principle of Christian mercy. When we take these circumstances into consideration, we shall not be surprised at finding that both the formation of new sees and the appointment of bishops, were from the first considered part of the prerogative of the Anglo-Saxon kings, which they exercised sometimes with, and sometimes without, the concurrence of the Witan.[1] It is true, as Dr. Lingard observes, that there is some ambiguity in the language of the ancient records upon this important subject, since they sometimes appear to speak of episcopal appointments as if made by the unfettered choice of the clergy and people, and sometimes as proceeding solely from the will of the sovereign. From this he infers the probability that both were conjoined, the recommendation of the prince operating as a command, while the choice of the clergy and people was a mere form preliminary to the consecration and confirmation of the prelate elect. Even Theodore (whose power in regulating the affairs of the Church seems to have far exceeded that of any other primate before his time or since), though he is said to have appointed and deposed bishops, and divided dioceses, of his own authority, can hardly have been so independent as to neglect altogether the wishes of the sovereign in such a matter as the appointment of a bishop. When he recommended bishop Chad to Lichfield, it is expressly stated that this was done at the request of the king of Mercia, and with the consent of Oswy, in whose kingdom Chad's monastery was.[2] It is said, however, that the clergy in Northumbria possessed the right of electing their bishops long after the time of Theodore; and that even as late as the end of the 8th century the canons of York exercised that right. Still these instances were probably exceptions to the general rule; certainly after the time of king Egbert the consent of the sovereign seems to have been indispensable for the validity of an episcopal appointment; and even Edgar, the great patron of the monastic order, when he gave the monks in cathedrals and abbeys the liberty of electing their bishops and abbots, took care to add the proviso that the election should be with the consent and advice of the king. We have a document extant of the date of 1020, in which the archbishop of York certifies to king Cnut that he has consecrated Ethelnoth archbishop of Canterbury, in pursuance of the order received from him; from which it has been probably concluded, that a royal mandate for the consecration of a bishop elect was usually directed to the metropolitan.[1]

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[1] Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 245. 263. 343. 369.

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[1] See Kemble, vol. ii. pp. 221. 376.; Lingard, vol. i. pp. 89—96.

[2] Bede, lib. iv. cap. 3.

Thus the important link, which connects the authorities of church and state, in the appointment of the bishops and archbishops by an act of the royal supremacy, was established in the earliest period of the English constitution. In some instances it might be thought desirable, as in the case of archbishop Dunstan, to obtain the concurrence of the legislature in an episcopal appointment; but at all events the consent of the Pope, except for the confirmation of metropolitans, was not required; nor was any attempt made as yet to divide the allegiance of the clergy, by exacting from them an oath of obedience to the Papal see. Nor did the Anglo-Saxon kings apparently act from a mere selfish regard to their own interests in this matter. They showed themselves in a remarkable manner, from the earliest introduction of Christianity, most zealous and active in its extension and propagation. They were truly nursing fathers to the infant Church, and by their princely liberality contributed mainly to raise it to the state of temporal dignity and importance which it acquired in the 8th century. It was from royal bounty that the Church of Winchester was enriched with a grant of all the lands, within seven miles of that city; it was royal bounty that bestowed the Isle of Selsey, containing 87 hides of land, together with 250 slaves, on the Church of Sussex; it was royal bounty that gave the Isle of Lindisfarne to bishop Aidan, and made the Church of Northumbria remarkable for its extensive possessions. The feelings, indeed, that influenced the donors may have been various. In some the ruling motive may have been a superstitious notion of pleasing God by the foundation of monastic societies, or benefiting their own souls, or the vain hope of making compensation for a sinful and profligate life by donations to the Church in its decline. In others, we must believe that it was a thankful sense of God's grace, in delivering them from the darkness of heathenism, and bringing them to the light of the Gospel. When we consider the number of cases recorded in Anglo-Saxon history, of princes retiring from their thrones to become simple monks, though we may not consider such acts worthy of especial admiration, we ought to allow that there must have been a strong sense of the realities of another world existing in the minds of those who could deliberately sacrifice all that seems most desirable upon earth for the sake of that unseen and eternal inheritance. And the same feeling which led some to become monks undoubtedly influenced others, in a lesser degree, to give largely of their substance to objects which they thought would tend to promote the glory of God. If such was the disposition of the princes towards the Church, we cannot wonder at the nobles eagerly following their example, and still further showing their affection for the ecclesiastical order by themselves seeking to be enrolled in the ranks of the ministry, or among the founders and benefactors of monastic societies. Berthwald, the primate who succeeded Theodore, was a near relative of the Mercian king. Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne, and Egbert, archbishop of York, of whom we shall have occasion to speak hereafter, were both of royal blood; the one being closely connected with the kings of Wessex, the other being brother to the ruler of Northumbria. Wilfrid, the great champion of the Papacy in the North, of whose munificent monastic foundations something has been said before, was of a noble Northumbrian family. Of like noble extraction was the celebrated contemporary and friend of Wilfrid, the Northumbrian Benedict Biscop. At the age of twenty-five, he left the court of Oswy on a pilgrimage to Rome, with the intention, also, of visiting the most famous monasteries on the continent, by way of preparation for embracing the monastic profession. Two years he spent at the abbey of Lerins near Marseilles, in France, where he became a monk; after which, at the command of Pope Vitalian, he accompanied Theodore to England, as his guide and interpreter, by whom he was entrusted with the government of the monks at Canterbury.[1] On his resignation of that office, in favour of Hadrian, he made another journey to Rome, from which he returned with a valuable collection of books and paintings. He then proceeded to Northumbria, where, having obtained from king Egfrid a donation of land, near the mouth of the river Wear, he founded his first monastery of Wearmouth. Soon afterwards he erected a second monastery on the southern bank of the Tyne, at Jarrow; and so great was the fame of the founder, that within a few years after his death, these two establishments contained no less than 600 monks. The rule adopted in these religious houses was drawn up by Biscop himself, and derived partly from that of Benedict, and partly from the discipline of the monasteries which he had visited in foreign parts. Biscop's labours were very successful in promoting the civilisation of his countrymen. He taught them the arts of making glass, and building with stone; and by the display of foreign paintings, and a large importation of books, he introduced a taste for the fine arts, as well as encouraged the advancement of learning. To the names of Wilfrid and Biscop we must add that of an illustrious Saxon lady, Hilda, as deservedly distinguished among the royal and noble founders of monasteries in this age. Hilda was allied to the royal families of East Anglia and Northumbria, and to her care Oswy commended his infant daughter Ælfleda, whom, on account of his victory over Penda, he had vowed to dedicate to God. Hilda founded at Whitby a double monastery, in one part of which a body of nuns, and in the other a fraternity of monks, obeyed her authority. This monastery was afterwards much celebrated, no less than five of the monks being raised to the episcopal office.[1]

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[1] Kemble, vol. ii. pp. 382, 383.

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[1] Lingard, vol. i. pp. 77. 207.

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[1] Bede, lib. iv. cap. 23. The subjection of the men to a woman may be considered a proof of the honour in which the female was held among the Anglo-Saxons. See Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 310. The double monastery appears to have been common in that age both in France and England. Bede, lib. iii. cap. 8. lib. iv. cap. 7.

CHAP. VII.

EMINENT ANGLO-SAXON TEACHERS, DIVINES, AND MISSIONARIES OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY. SYNODS HELD DURING THAT PERIOD. PROGRESS OF THE PAPAL POWER.

THE greater part of the 7th century had passed away before the missionaries had completed the work of planting the faith in the different Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Such a work was necessarily gradual and subject to many checks and hinderances; and while the infant Church was still struggling into existence, the religious state of the people was too unsettled to give much opportunity for the encouragement of Christian scholarship, or the advancement of sound knowledge and learning. When, however, the whole country had embraced the faith, the case was very different; and hence we find, among the teachers of the English Church in the 8th century, some of the most eminent men of the age. Of these one of the earliest in date was Aldhelm, made abbot of Malmsbury in 671, and bishop of Sherborne in 705. Aldhelm was one of the earliest of English poets, and made his art subservient to the higher office of instructing the people in the knowledge of the gospel. Having composed tales and ballads in the Saxon tongue on subjects likely to be of popular interest, he used to station himself on a bridge, or at the junction of cross roads, and there sing his poems to the harp, till he had collected an audience; then, having charmed their ears with his music, he took occasion to give them spiritual instruction for their souls. Aldhelm, moreover, had an extensive knowledge of the Greek and Latin tongues, and of the canon and Roman law. For this he was in a great measure indebted to the school of Hadrian at Canterbury, though he had in earlier life been a pupil of a learned Scottish monk. He was also the first English scholar who was distinguished for composition of Latin prose and verse; and though his poetical performances in that language are not remarkable for elegance, they are by no means contemptible when we consider the barbarism of the preceding age, and the difficulties with which the student had to contend.[1] Nearly contemporary with Aldhelm, was the ancient historian of the English Church, generally known to posterity by the epithet that has been affixed to his name, as the Venerable Bede. Born on one of the lands belonging to Benedict Biscop's monastery at Wearmouth, he was at an early age delivered by his family to the care of that learned monk, who afterwards consigned him to his brother abbot Ceolfrid, who presided over the sister monastic institution at Jarrow. He is supposed to have been there in 686, when a pestilence swept away all the monks except the abbot and one little boy, who alone remained to chant the daily services of the Church. When he had completed his nineteenth year, though of an age much below that which was required by the canons of the Church, he was ordained deacon by bishop John of Hexham, but still continued to reside at the monastery, performing the daily services, and devoting all the leisure hours he could command to the diligent pursuit of learning. Though he had no other aids than were afforded by the library of the monastery, and the books that were lent him by friends, he sought an acquaintance with every science that was then studied, and soon rose considerably above his contemporaries. In 703, being ordained priest, he was desired by his bishop and the abbot of his monastery to write for the instruction of his countrymen; and thenceforth, for thirty years, he employed himself in the composition of works, most of which have been preserved to our own times. Among these are to be found treatises on the elementary parts of different sciences, on astronomy and chronology, homilies, biographies of the abbots of his own monastery, lives of the saints, and commentaries on different books of Holy Scripture. The work, however, by which Bede is chiefly known to posterity, is his "Ecclesiastical History of England." In the composition of this he was encouraged not only by the assistance of all the English bishops, who furnished him with such information as they could command, but also by that of Pope Gregory III., who gave orders that the records of the Roman see should be examined for the purpose of supplying materials for the history.[1] The work was received with applause both by contemporaries and succeeding generations; and the great Alfred, 150 years later, thought it worth while to translate it into Anglo-Saxon for the benefit of such of his countrymen as could not read the original Latin. It is a work that has well deserved its popularity, not only on account of the information it gives respecting the conversion of England, but of the simplicity and unaffected piety of the writer. We may smile at the credulity which has so plentifully embellished it with miraculous tales, but no Englishman can read it in a spirit of fairness without feeling some pride on account of the country which, when hardly yet emerging from barbarism, produced the Venerable Bede.[2]

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 155. 184—189.; Lappenberg, vol. i. p. 265.

Bede finished his history in 731. Three years after this, he visited Egbert, recently consecrated bishop of York, for the sake of reading in his monastery at York, which visit he promised to repeat in the following year. The next year he was too ill to perform his promise, but sent a long and interesting letter to Egbert, on the state of his diocese, and the matters which required reformation. After this his infirmities rapidly increased, and about Easter 735, it became apparent that his end was drawing nigh. From a contemporary account of his death, written by one of his pupils, it appears that he lingered on, until Ascension Day, in a state of great debility, but without much pain. He continued to give daily lessons to his pupils, devoting the rest of his time, and even the sleepless hours of night, to constant psalmody, prayer, and thanksgiving. The words of Holy Scripture, and in particular such warnings as that of St. Paul, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,"[1] were constantly on his lips; and he repeated some verses in Anglo-Saxon, the burden of which was the necessity of an early preparation for death and eternity. He also gave thanks to God for the infirmities which he suffered, often repeating the words of the Apostle, "God scourgeth every son whom He receiveth,"[2] and dwelling on that saying of Ambrose, "I have not lived so as to be ashamed to live among you, nor do I fear to die, for we have a gracious God." Among the collects which he used to chant, was one for the Ascension Day, the substance of which is still preserved in our Prayer Book, in the service for the Sunday after that day: "O King of Glory, Lord of Hosts, who on this day didst ascend in triumph above all the heavens, leave us not orphans, but send upon us the Spirit of Truth, the promise of the Father." When Bede came to the words "leave us not orphans," he burst into tears and wept much, and all his audience were moved to tears in like manner. All this while, notwithstanding his extreme debility, he had been able to continue a work which he had undertaken,—a translation of St. John's Gospel into Anglo-Saxon. Though unable to write, he dictated the words of the translation to one of his pupils. On the Tuesday before Ascension Day, he seemed conscious of his approaching end; but still both on that and the following day, he continued to dictate with the same cheerfulness and diligence as before, saying occasionally to those who wrote, "Lose no time. I know not how long I may last: Perhaps in a very short time my Maker may take me." On the morning of the Wednesday, the pupils were obliged to leave him to walk in procession with the relics of the saints, according to the practice of the time and the rubric of their Church. One, however, remained with his master, and ventured to suggest that there was a chapter of the translation of the Gospel still unwritten, and to ask that it might be completed. Bede complied without hesitation, and the work was nearly finished, when he recollected that he had some little commissions to execute before his death. He said to the writer of this account, "I have some valuables in my little chest, pepper, handkerchiefs, and incense. Run quickly, and bring the priests of the monastery to me, that I may make to them such presents as God hath given to me. The rich of this world give gold and silver, and other things of value. I will give to my brethren what God hath given to me, and will give it with love and pleasure." He then spoke to each in turn, reminding them to celebrate masses, and to pray diligently for him, which all readily promised to do. He continued to speak cheerfully to them of his dissolution till sunset, when he was reminded that there was still a sentence of the translation unwritten. "Then write quickly," said Bede to the pupil who acted as his amanuensis. In a few minutes the young man replied, "It is finished." "Thou hast spoken truly," he replied: "take my hand between thy hands, for it is my delight to sit opposite to that holy place in which I used to pray; let me sit and invoke my Father." Sitting thus on the pavement of his cell, and repeating "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," as he finished the word "Ghost," he expired.[1]

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[1] Preface to Bede's History, addressed to Ceolwulph, King of Northumbria.

[2] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 190—194.

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[1] Heb. x. 31.

[2] Heb. xii. 6.

We have mentioned that one of the last of Bede's public acts was to address a letter to Egbert, archbishop of York, on the state of the Church in general, and that diocese in particular. It may be remembered that it had been part of the original scheme of Gregory to establish a metropolitan see at York, but after the flight of Paulinus from Northumbria, the project was for some time given up, and none of the bishops before Egbert, who held spiritual jurisdiction in the kingdom of Northumbria (whether of Scottish or English origin), enjoyed metropolitan rights. During the primacy of Theodore and his immediate successors, the northern bishops were placed under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Canterbury. Egbert was the first bishop of York after Paulinus, who asserted his independence, and finally obtained from Rome the acknowledgment of his metropolitan title. In this claim he was powerfully supported by the influence of his cousin Ceolwulph, who then held the Northumbrian throne. By a decree of Pope Gregory III., the Anglo-Saxon bishoprics north of the Humber were subjected to the authority of the bishop of York, and Egbert received the pall as a badge and confirmation of that authority.[2]

The letter of Bede to Egbert seems to have been written before this change took place, as it is one of the reforms upon which he insists, as likely to tend to the benefit of the Church. The letter is remarkable for the boldness with which he proposes a measure of redistribution of Church property, which some persons of our own day would call by the harsher name of spoliation. He advocates the necessity of establishing more bishoprics, and suggests that monasteries should be turned into episcopal sees, and that the lands belonging to them should be annexed by way of endowment to such sees. He even proposes that Egbert should use his influence with the king of Northumbria to procure the reversal of charters, for the accomplishment of this object; giving as a reason for such a suggestion that some of the monasteries were neither serviceable to God nor conducive to piety. In one part of the letter he mentions an abuse which had crept in, of persons pretending to found monasteries, and obtaining charters of privilege from the king, in order to hold their lands discharged from secular burdens; and he strongly urges Egbert to exercise his episcopal right of visiting and correcting the monasteries of his diocese.[1]

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[1] See the contemporary narrative contained in a letter from his pupil Cuthbert. Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 195—200., and William of Malmsbury's Chronicle of the Kings of England, lib. i. cap. 3.

[2] Sax. Chron. an. 735; Malmsbury Kings of England, lib. i. cap. 3.; Lingard, vol. i. p. 79.

Egbert, to whom these exhortations were addressed, was a man of no ordinary stamp. Though among his contemporaries he was chiefly celebrated for the elaborate work which, under the name of a Penitential, he composed for the guidance of his clergy in matters of conscience with respect to the treatment of penitents, his fame, in the opinion of posterity, rests upon a more firm and lasting basis, on account of the zeal and munificence with which he patronised learning. His royal birth and high station did not prevent him from giving up his time and labour to the important work of teaching the young who resorted to the episcopal monastery at York. Among these, the most renowned both at home and abroad was Flaccus Albinus or Alcuin.

This eminent scholar, who is one of the great luminaries of the 8th century, was born at York, about A. D. 740, and consigned by his parents at an early age to the care of archbishop Egbert, who placed him under the tuition of Ælbert, then head-master of the archbishop's school, and afterwards his successor in the see. In his youth he appears to have accompanied Ælbert on a pilgrimage to

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[1] Collier's Eccles. Hist., vol. i. pp. 292, 293.

Rome; and when his master was raised to the archiepiscopal throne, Alcuin was appointed teacher of the school at York in his place. From this time the reputation of the school increased, and scholars were attracted thither from the continent of Europe. Ælbert had such a high opinion of Alcuin, as to send him on a special mission to the emperor Charlemagne, and also to entrust him with the charge of erecting a new cathedral at York; and finally, he bequeathed to him the treasures of his ample library.[1]

After Ælbert's death, Alcuin again visited Rome in order to procure the pall for Eanbald, the next archbishop; and on his return, saw Charlemagne a second time at Parma. The emperor proposed to him to settle in his dominions; to which Alcuin, after obtaining the consent of the king of Northumbria and the archbishop of York, finally agreed, and in 782 established his residence at the imperial court. Charlemagne himself and his principal officers became his scholars; from the court, the fashion of cultivating learning spread to the provinces; laws were published for its encouragement, and schools established in different parts of the empire.

Among other things to which Alcuin's attention was directed, was the correction of the errors which had crept into the liturgical books then in use, as well as into the MSS. of the Old and New Testaments. In those days when printing was unknown, the art of transcribing MSS. became of the utmost importance, and yet this work frequently fell to the lot of ignorant and ill-educated men.

The German emperor was fully sensible of the value of Alcuin's services, and rewarded them by presenting him with some valuable benefices in France. But the possession of wealth, and ease, and royal favour, were not sufficient to compensate for exile from his native country. He considered himself bound by his ordination to the Church of York, and repeatedly sought leave to return thither, but in vain. At length a quarrel having arisen between Charlemagne and Offa, king of Mercia, with reference to a double matrimonial alliance proposed between the two courts, Alcuin was chosen as a mediator to bring about peace. The visit to England, which he took on this occasion, he contrived to prolong to three years, but it was the last. Never again could he obtain the emperor's permission to leave his adopted country. The infirmities of age began afterwards to grow upon him, and he was allowed to retire from the court to the abbey of Tours, the appointment to which he received from Charlemagne, A. D. 796. From that retirement he occasionally came forth to assist the emperor with his counsel, and to attend ecclesiastical synods. On one of these occasions he was called upon to refute the doctrine of Felix[1], who had propounded some novel notions respecting the adoption of our Lord Jesus Christ. After a controversy in the emperor's presence, which lasted six days, Felix acknowledged and retracted his error. The remainder of Alcuin's days was for the most part devoted to his favourite occupation of teaching, to exercises of devotion, and to an earnest and faithful preparation for his death, which took place in 804. His writings were very numerous and of various kinds; comprising dialogues for his pupils, elementary treatises on the sciences, lives of eminent men, a few poems, and a large collection of letters. His theological writings consisted in part of treatises against the doctrines of Felix and Elipandus, and of commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, chiefly taken from the works of the Fathers. His merit as a scholar was preeminent; and the zeal with which he promoted the diffusion of learning, both in his own country and on the continent, entitles him to the grateful remembrance of posterity.[1]

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 203, 204. Some writers represent the library to have been bequeathed by Egbert. The mistake may have arisen from the similarity of the names of Helbertus and Egbertus.

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[1] Felix's doctrine appears to have been something like the error of Nestorius. Mosheim, lib. iii. cent. viii. cap. v. Elipandus also taught the same doctrine in Spain.

In recording the obligations which the English ecclesiastics of the 8th century conferred upon Europe, we should be guilty of a great omission, if we neglected to notice particularly the eminent missionaries, who at this period went forth from England and Ireland to preach the gospel in the pagan parts of the continent.

Bishop Wilfrid's labours for the conversion of Friesland were apparently not attended with any lasting effects; but he set an example, which others were able afterwards to imitate with greater success. In the middle of the 7th century, the monasteries of Ireland were so celebrated as to attract the youth of the higher classes of England thither for the purpose of study.[2] Among the pupils of these seminaries was a noble Northumbrian, of the name of Egbert, who appears to have been the first to conceive the idea of sending out missionaries to the North of Germany. He was prevented from fulfilling his design in person, but his disciples did not suffer the project to die away. Of these, Wigbert laboured among the Friesians for two years without success, but the undertaking was not abandoned. His successor was Willibrord, originally a monk of Ripon, who in 690 sailed from Ireland to the mouth of the Rhine with eleven other Anglo-Saxon missionaries. Having succeeded in converting a part of Friesland to the faith, he received episcopal consecration from pope Sergius in 696, under the name of Clement, together with a grant of the pall, as metropolitan of Friesland. His see was fixed at Utrecht, and he spent fifty years in missionary labours.

Two other pupils of Egbert (who each bore the same name, but were distinguished by the appellations of Hewald the White, and Hewald the Black, from the colour of their hair,) were excited by Willibrord's success to go on a mission to the Old Saxons; but their presence among the barbarians creating suspicion, they were soon put to death.[1] Swidbert and others, who were companions of Willibrord, laboured with success in Holland and Rhenish Prussia. The most celebrated, however, of the English missionaries was a native of Crediton in Devonshire, whose original name was Winfrid, but who is more widely known by his assumed name of Boniface, and by the title of the Apostle of Germany. He was brought up in the monastery of Exeter; from which he afterwards removed to another at Nuscelle in Hampshire; and subsequently acquired some fame as a teacher, and also by his pulpit eloquence. At one period, he was introduced to the court of King Ine of Wessex, and might have attained the first ecclesiastical dignities; but he aspired to the less splendid but more enduring fame of being a missionary of the Gospel. His first voyage to Friesland in 716 ended in disappointment. That country, which had owed its Christianity in part to its having been conquered by the Franks, relapsed into paganism upon the death of the Frankish king; and the missionaries were expelled. Winfrid, on his return to England, had his ambitious inclinations again tempted by his being elected abbot of his own monastery of Nuscelle. Through the influence of Daniel, the Bishop of Winchester, the election was annulled; and in 719, the missionary again set sail with several companions for the continent. On this occasion, he went at once to Rome to solicit the aid and blessing of the Pope (Gregory II.), who assigned him Germany for the scene of his labours.

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 202—213.

[2] Bede, lib. iii. cap. 27.

Boniface, as he was now called, commenced with Bavaria and the country of the Thuringii, where the Gospel had been preached in former times, although the people generally retained the habits of paganism. From this country he returned for a time to Friesland, where he laboured for three years under the directions of the aged Willibrord. Here he had the offer of being appointed the successor of that prelate; but he declined the honour, and chose rather to commence a new mission in the countries of Hesse and Old Saxony. His work in this new field was blessed with great success. He is said to have cut down with his own hands the consecrated oak of Jupiter, one of the most precious objects of idolatry. In 723 he was sent for by the Pope, Gregory II., who consecrated him a missionary bishop. On this occasion, Boniface bound himself by an oath to St. Peter and the Pope, as his supposed vicar; which proceeding, as we meet with no other instance, at so early a period, of an oath exacted by the Pope of foreign bishops, may be regarded as one among many proofs of the devoted submission of the Apostle of Germany to the Papal see. He swore to the effect, that he would maintain the Catholic faith pure, and remain in the unity of the same, and do nothing contrary to the unity or prejudicial to the interests of the Church; and that if he should find any prelates living in opposition to the ancient decrees of the Fathers, he would hold no communion with them, but rather prevent such a thing as far as he was able; and that, if he could not prevent it, he would inform the Pope.[1]

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[1] Bede, lib. v. cap. 10, 11.

This was, in so many words, to declare that he was a missionary of the Papacy, as much as of the Christian religion; and Boniface's general conduct seems, in this respect, to have been in perfect conformity with his oath, as we shall see more hereafter.

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 478—480 (note T).

In 732, he received the pall, and afterwards was appointed Papal vicar over the French, as well as the German bishops. Through his exhortations, several more missionaries from England were induced to come and share his labours; and though they were doomed to endure severe disappointments and great hardships, in consequence of the hostility of the tribes that still remained pagan, their zeal and perseverance enabled them to overcome the greatest difficulties.

In his character of Papal vicar, Boniface endeavoured to carry into effect great reforms in the Church of France, then suffering severely both from the sacrilegious proceedings of the great nobles, and from the immoral lives of the clergy. His attempts to obtain restitution of Church property failed; but he succeeded in procuring the enactment of laws by different synods for the enforcing of discipline among the clergy. In 748, he was made Archbishop of Mentz (the bishop of which city had been deposed for homicide), with metropolitan authority over all the German Churches on either bank of the Rhine, from Utrecht to the Rhætian Alps. He did not long retain this dignity. Feeling the infirmities of age coming upon him, he addressed a request to Pepin, the French king, that Lullus, one of his fellow bishops, also an Englishman, might be appointed archbishop in his place. His request was granted; but though relieved from the cares of a metropolitan, he could not desist, notwithstanding his age, from his favourite occupation of preaching to the heathen. He once more proceeded to those countries which had been the first field of his missionary labours, and resolved to devote the remainder of his days to the conversion of Friesland. In 755, he descended the Rhine, with his countryman Bishop Eoban, a few priests, deacons and monks, and a party of laymen; and having induced several of the idolaters to submit to baptism, he appointed a day for their confirmation. He was prevented from fulfilling his purpose by the incursion of a hostile band of Friesians; and, forbidding his companions to defend themselves by force, he calmly and with thankful resignation awaited the fate of a martyr. The whole company were immediately put to the sword by the enraged barbarians.

Though the subserviency of Boniface to the designs of the Papacy is open to much reprehension, it is impossible not to admire the zeal, perseverance, devotion, and courage of this Anglo-Saxon missionary bishop.

He was the founder of several monasteries, the largest and most celebrated of which was at Fulda, in the country of Hesse. He also, with the concurrence of the Pope and the sovereign, established new bishoprics in different parts of Germany, some of which were bestowed upon his English fellow-labourers. He procured, moreover, the assistance of several English ladies, who co-operated with him in the foundation of nunneries in different places in Germany, and were appointed to preside over those institutions.[1]

Before we conclude this notice of the eminent English missionaries of the eighth century, it may be well to add a plan of progressive instruction for the heathen, taken from the works of Alcuin, which may probably have been followed by the most judicious among them, and which certainly affords valuable hints for the guidance of modern missionaries.

"This order should be pursued in teaching mature persons: — 1st. They should be instructed in the immortality of the soul; in the future life; in its retribution of good and evil; and in the eternal duration of both conditions.

2ndly. They should then be informed for what sins and crimes they will have to suffer, with the Devil, everlasting punishments; and for what good and beneficial deeds they will enjoy unceasing glory with Christ.

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 336—353. Soames's Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 111. note.

"3rdly. The faith of the Holy Trinity is then to be most diligently taught, and the coming of our Saviour into the world for the salvation of the human race. Afterwards impress the mystery of His passion; the truth of His resurrection; His glorious ascension; His future advent to judge all nations; and the resurrection of our bodies.

"Thus prepared and strengthened, the man may be baptized."[1]

In giving the honour due to Boniface, as a devoted missionary of the Gospel, we must not forget the boldness and ability with which he attempted to reform what was amiss in his native country. Some letters of his which have come down to us, addressed to Ethelbald, King of Mercia, and Cuthbert, the primate[2], give an unfavourable picture of the moral state of the Anglo-Saxons of that age. We are not, indeed, to suppose that Christianity had produced no good effects among them; but rather, that the corruption of morals was the consequence of the abuse of religious institutions and practices; as, for instance, where the monastic profession was made a cloke for a life of sin, in the case of the false monks before mentioned; and more particularly in the practice of nuns and other females making pilgrimages to Rome, which ended in their losing their virtue abroad, to the great shame and scandal of the whole English Church. Boniface was determined to go to the fountain-head for the reformation of these evils, and represent to Ethelbald himself (whose life appears to have been one of scandalous immorality) the heinousness of his sins, faithfully warning him of his spiritual danger, and alleging even the comparatively virtuous conduct of the heathen, by way of effectually stirring him up to shame and repentance. The letter to Cuthbert was partly to the same effect, and contained also the most admirable description, in truly Scriptural terms, of the duties and responsibilities of the episcopal office; but even on such an occasion as this, Boniface could not omit to show his excessive devotion to the Roman see. Along with the letter was transmitted to the English primate a copy of the canons of a synod just held at Mentz, under the presidency of Boniface, which acknowledged the supremacy of the Pope in terms of complete subjection. One of these canons provided that, if a bishop should be unable to reform any abuse in his diocese by his own authority, he should acquaint the archbishop of the province and his fellow bishops in a provincial synod.

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[1] Alcuin cited in Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. iii. p. 519.

[2] Malmsbury, Kings of England, lib. i. cap. 4.; Johnson's Canons, i. p. 241.

This canon, it is true, said nothing about any further appeals from the provincial synod: but Boniface, in his letter to Cuthbert, gave a hint that there was a higher court to which such appeals should be made; viz., the judgment of the Pope. Referring to the oath which he had himself taken, at his consecration, that he would inform the apostolic see of any evils which he was unable to correct of himself, he adds: — "In like manner, if I mistake not, all bishops ought to make known to their metropolitan, and he, in his turn, to the Roman pontiff, if there is any evil among them which they find it impossible to correct; and so will they be free from the blood of lost sheep."[1]

It appears from other proceedings that took place about this time, that the same evils which drew forth these remonstrances of Boniface also attracted the notice of the Pope Zachary, who thought fit to use very strong language in the letters which he wrote upon the subject. Whether, as has been stated, he ordered Cuthbert to take measures for the removal of these scandals, does not appear. All that we know is, that in the year 742, a council was summoned by King Ethelbald and the primate to meet at Cloveshoo[1], which was attended by the suffragan bishops of the province of Canterbury, but not by any from that of York.

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[1] Collier, vol. i. p. 300.; Lingard, vol. i. pp. 392. 394.

Ethelbald seems to have acted as president, though the chief part in the transaction of the business of the council devolved on Cuthbert. The proceedings of the synod were opened by reading, first in Latin, and then in an English translation, two letters from Zachary, the Pope, styled, in the Acts of the Council, "the Apostolic Lord, the Pontiff, to be held in reverence in the whole world." In these "he familiarly admonished the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of the island of Britain; he reasoned with them; and lastly, in a loving manner, entreated them, and added that a sentence of anathema should be published against all those who despised his warning and obstinately persisted in their wickedness."[2]

Notwithstanding this beginning, which seemed to promise an implicit devotion on the part of the assembled prelates to the will of him whom they called their Apostolic Lord, there is nothing, in the canons enacted at this synod, that implies any particular leaning towards Rome, beyond some directions for conformity with the offices of the Roman Church in the ceremonies appointed for certain fasts and festivals.[3] They professed to follow the examples placed before them in the homilies of Pope Gregory and the canonical decrees of the Fathers, and thereupon set themselves to compose an excellent compendium of canons for the general regulation of the discipline and morals of the clergy and of the monks, and of sundry matters belonging to divine worship. They decreed that the bishops should be regular in the visitation of their dioceses, and diligent in preaching to their people, and forbidding the use of pagan rites among them; that they should inquire particularly into the former lives of those whom they ordained to the ministry; and that they should keep up a strict inspection of the monasteries in their dioceses, and see that neither monasteries nor nunneries were abused for foolish, trifling, or immoral purposes, but made habitations for those who prayed, and read, and praised God, and lived lives of sobriety and continence. In like manner the inferior clergy were admonished to be faithful stewards, separated from secular business, devoted to the works of their calling, having a proper knowledge and understanding of their duties, blameless in their lives, and especially free from the besetting sin of their countrymen, drunkenness.

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[1] Sax. Chron. Malmsbury says that the council was called by Archbishop Cuthbert and Ethelbald, the king. Kings of England, lib. i. cap. 4.

[2] Lingard, vol. i. p. 124. note; Johnson's Canons, i. p. 243.

[3] Canons of Cloveshoo in Johnson, Nos. xiii., xv., xvi., xviii.

Among these canons was one which provided, in the same terms as that of the German Council of Boniface, for the reference to the metropolitan and a synod, of such matters as a bishop was unable to reform in his own diocese; but the hint of Boniface, with respect to the propriety of referring such cases in like manner from the metropolitan to the Pope, was not embodied in the acts of either synod. There are some other provisions of this council which deserve especial notice; viz. that which directs that the priests should teach and explain to the people the Creed and Lord's Prayer in English, and also the words pronounced at the celebration of the Eucharist, and in the office of Baptism, and that they should take care to learn the meaning of the Sacraments themselves. So, again, there is a remarkable canon against the commutation of penance by almsgiving, and another which protests against the monstrous abuse of supposing that one man's good works can save another from the punishment due to his sins.[1]

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[1] Canons x., xxv., xxvi., xxvii.

Ethelbald, who presided at this council, appears to have reformed his life from the vices of his youth, which drew upon him the censure of Boniface, and, by way of showing his devotion to religion, he became a very liberal patron of monasteries. Among other things, he released all churches and monastic lands in his kingdom from all dues to the State, except the inevitable three of which mention was made above.[1] After a long reign he was slain in battle against the King of Wessex, his rival for the supremacy in Britain, A.D. 757. A contest for the throne of Mercia succeeded, which was terminated before long in favour of Offa, a prince of a warlike and ambitious disposition, celebrated alike for his abilities and for his crimes, who not only obtained a superiority among contemporary Anglo-Saxon kings, but acquired an influence on the continent of Europe, and in the court of the Emperor Charlemagne. Offa's pride could ill bear that the first metropolitan see in the English Church should belong to the tributary kingdom of Kent, and the second to the now declining state of Northumbria. Having failed in his endeavours to persuade Jaenbyrct or Lambert, then Archbishop of Canterbury, to transfer his see to Lichfield, he was determined to have a new archbishopric created for the kingdom of Mercia. With this view he sent messengers to Rome, to procure the consent of the Pope Adrian to the change, and the honour of the pall for the Bishop of Lichfield. It is said that Offa had a personal feeling against Lambert, which influenced him in this matter, on account of a supposed league between the archbishop and Charlemagne, in opposition to the Mercian king. However this may have been, a council was held at Calcuith[2]

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[1] See one charter of his in Malmsbury's Kings of England, vol. i. p. 4., another in Johnson's Canons, i. p. 238.; Kemble, Codex Diplomaticus, No. lxxxvii., xcix.

[2] Supposed to be Challock, or Chalk, in Kent. Soames, Anglo-Saxon Church, p. 107. note.

A.D. 785, which is called by the Saxon Chronicle a "contentious synod," in which Lambert was compelled to surrender a portion of his archiepiscopal jurisdiction to the Bishop of Lichfield. The Pope was either wearied out by importunity, or induced by false representations, or, as some say, persuaded by gifts, to give his consent to the scheme.[1] The effect of the partition was, that all the churches of Mercia and East Anglia were severed from the jurisdiction of the metropolitan of Canterbury, and made subject to Higebert, the new Archbishop of Lichfield. The personal superiority of Lambert to Higebert appears to have been preserved to him during his life, but his successor, Athelard, was obliged to give way in the national councils to the metropolitan of Lichfield, as the senior archbishop.[2]

The arrangement, which was thus effected, did not last many years, and Higebert appears to have been the only Bishop of Lichfield who enjoyed the archiepiscopal dignity.[3] Offa, dying in 796, was succeeded, after the short reign of his son, Egferth, by Kenulf, who was led by motives of policy to conciliate the clergy of Kent (which kingdom was then subject to Mercia), by restoring to the province of Canterbury its former ecclesiastical jurisdiction.[4] Kenulf wrote a letter to Leo III., the successor of Adrian, accompanied with a present of a hundred and twenty mancuses (about fifteen pounds), and expressive of his readiness to obey, with all humility, the Pope's commands. In this he propounded the question to Leo, whether the division of the province of Canterbury was in conformity with the constitution of the Church of England, as settled by the decrees of

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[1] Saxon Chron. anno 785; Malmsbury, Kings of England, lib. i. cap. 4.; Idem, de Gestis Pont., cited by Soames, Anglo-Saxon Church, p. 105.

[2] See the signatures to the charters referred to in Lingard, vol. i. p. 81. note.

[3] Johnson's Canons, i. p. 285. note.

[4] Lappenberg, vol. i. p. 239.

Pope Gregory; and requested him to confer with his counsellors on the subject, and to give directions what was to be observed by himself and his subjects in future, so as to preserve the unity of real peace among them. This epistle, along with others from the English bishops, appears to have been conveyed to the Pope by Athelard himself, who was then Archbishop of Canterbury, and who left no stone unturned in order to obtain for his see the restitution of its ancient dignity. Leo's answer was highly complimentary, both to the king and to Athelard; and concluded with a declaration that the jurisdiction of Canterbury should be restored to its ancient footing.[1] The archbishop's journey to Rome was in 799, but it was not till 803 that this restitution was finally accomplished. In that year Athelard summoned a council of the twelve suffragan bishops of the ancient province of Canterbury, to meet at Cloveshoo, in obedience to the Pope's commands, which decreed that the archiepiscopal see should never thenceforth be fixed at the minster of Lichfield, nor in any other place but Christ Church at Canterbury. Moreover, with respect to the grant of the pall and the archiepiscopal dignity to Lichfield by Pope Adrian, the council declared the same to be of no validity, because obtained by fraudulent and surreptitious means. The proceedings of this synod appear to have been confirmed by an act of a witenagemot, holden at the same time and place.[2]

Although the assent of the civil power was considered necessary for the confirmation of this important ecclesiastical arrangement, yet the whole proceedings, respecting the creation and abolition of the Archbishopric of Lichfield, testify strongly to the great increase of the Papal power in England during the 8th century. The scandals, which had led to the calling of the Council of Cloveshoo, were so glaring, as to afford a plausible excuse for the interference of the Pope, as the first bishop of the West in point of dignity, and as presiding over a Church which was the mother of the English Church. But in the case of the Archbishopric of Lichfield, English sovereigns condescended to solicit the aid of the Pope, in a manner not very consistent with their dignity, for the purpose of enabling them to exercise rights, which belonged to the supreme power of the state in conjunction with the prelates of the country; and which could not, without dishonour, be surrendered to any foreign bishop or other potentate. One act of papal interference soon led to another and a more dangerous encroachment upon the independence of the English Church. At the Council of Calcuith, two Italian bishops, Gregory of Ostia, and Theophylact of Todi, attended as Pope Adrian's legates, being the first who had appeared in England under a papal commission since Augustine.

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[1] Malmsbury, Kings of England, lib. i. cap. 4. Johnson's Canons, i. p. 287. note.

[2] Johnson's Canons, i. p. 297. Kemble, vol. ii. p. 248.

These legates first propounded a body of canons before a Northumbrian synod, at which the King and the Archbishop of York, and all the Northumbrian prelates and nobles were present, and required the assent of the synod to these canons in the Pope's name. Having met with a willing obedience to their wishes on the part of the northern council, they proceeded to Mercia, where they laid the same constitutions before King Offa and the Council of Calcuith, whom they found equally obsequious to the papal authority.[1] Though there is much in these canons that is perfectly unexceptionable and even praiseworthy, as respects the discipline of the clergy, and the injunctions for the observance of clerical duties, and more particularly the attempts to root out pagan rites from among the people, they bear upon the face of them the stamp of a foreign origin, and show unquestionable signs of the progress of that spirit of servile submission to Rome, which was now beginning to prevail.

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[1] Legatine Canons of Calcuith, Johnson, vol. i. pp. 264—282.

The fourth canon puts the decrees of the Roman pontiffs on the same footing as those of the six general councils; the eighth confirms all privileges bestowed by the Roman See on all churches; the fourteenth asserts by implication the necessity of communion with the Church of Rome and St. Peter; and the eleventh, under pretext of giving due honour both to the civil and to the ecclesiastical powers, seems almost to imply that the latter is not only independent of the former, but superior to it.

Offa, the sovereign who tamely submitted to these encroachments, was a man peculiarly fitted to be made an instrument for promoting the purposes of ecclesiastical domination. Having his conscience burdened with the foul murder of Ethelbert, King of East Anglia, he was anxious towards the close of life to make (according to the prevalent doctrine of the age) an atonement for that and other crimes, by deeds of liberality to the church. To this cause, probably, is to be ascribed the foundation of a splendid abbey by him at Verulam, in memory of the British martyr Alban, whose relics were said to have been discovered at that time, and from whom the abbey was called St. Alban's.[1] The same motive led Offa to make a pilgrimage to Rome, which was attended by important consequences. He there founded or endowed a school for the instruction of young Anglo-Saxons in the Catholic faith. For its support he is said to have established a tax of one penny on each house in his kingdom. This tax was afterwards known by the name of Rome-fee, or Rome-shot, and Peter-pence, and in the 10th century was considered one of the accustomed dues of the Church in

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[1] Malmsbury, Kings of England, lib. i. cap. 4.

England; from which time it was remitted to Rome, with occasional interruptions, until the Reformation. As, however, such an imposition could only be made with the consent of the legislature, there seems reason to question whether it existed in the shape of a tax so early as the time of Offa; and it is more probable that what he gave, or attempted to give, was not regularly continued by his successors.[1]

But, whatever date may be assigned to the commencement of the tax of Peter-pence, there can be no doubt, from what we have mentioned above, that in the course of the 8th century, Anglo-Saxon kings and prelates submitted to the pope's dictation, with respect to the holding of synods, the making of canons, and the territorial divisions of the Church, in a manner that was altogether inconsistent with religious independence. We also find the most able and zealous missionaries of that age, coming forth from England to teach the pagans of Germany and Friesland, that they must submit to papal authority. A similar feeling influenced English scholars and men of learning. Bede and Alcuin were unquestionably devoted advocates of the papal supremacy; and to the English of that age may with equal truth be attributed the character, which was bestowed upon them by a writer of the next century, of being especially, above other nations, attached to the apostolic see.[2]

But after all what do these facts, when admitted, prove? Not, certainly (as has been well observed) "that sort of dependence *de jure*, which zealous papal partisans have asserted, as the normal condition of the English Church."[1] To prove that, nothing else will avail than a divine grant to the popes, as the successors of St. Peter; and such a grant no man ever has shown or can show. Let it be granted, that the eminent men of whom we have just spoken, believed that a supreme authority over the Church was derived to the popes from St. Peter. Their error upon this point need not weigh with us more than their errors upon other points, of which we shall have to speak hereafter. Let it be granted, also, that there was, during the Middle Ages, an agreement among all who were the most earnest and deep thinkers of their times in exalting the papal authority. The times themselves afford a sufficient explanation of this. From the period of the dissolution of the Roman Empire, the Church seemed continually to require an outward compact form of union under one head, in order to stem the advancing tide of barbarism. As light and knowledge grew more and more dim, the expediency or necessity of such an union was the more felt, and in times, which seemed to render the exercise of papal authority expedient, no one thought of questioning the source from which it was derived. Add to this, that Saxon England was in fact much indebted to the papacy for such knowledge of religion as it possessed, and we cannot reasonably wonder at the extreme deference paid of old in this country to the example, advice, and authority of the see of Rome. The same reasons, however, ought no longer to influence us to pay the same homage at present, for this simple reason; that we can no longer acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope (even in the most modified form) without submitting to terms of communion, which we feel bound to reject as unscriptural. The pope, as the first in dignity of the bishops of the West, might, during the Middle

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[1] Malmsbury, Kings of England, lib. ii. cap. 2., makes Offa the founder of the Roman School. Matthew of Westminister ascribes the foundation to King Ina of Wessex. A life of Offa ascribed to Matthew Paris says that Offa endowed the school, which was already existing, and for that purpose established the Rome-fee, or Peter-pence. Lappenberg, vol. i. p. 205. Lingard supposes the tax to have been begun in the reign of Alfred, vol. i. pp. 282—284.

[2] Note to Kemble, vol. ii. p. 372.

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[1] Kemble, vol. ii. p. 370

Ages, fairly claim to take the lead in matters of religion, especially where all agreed with him in doctrine ; and even, though he asserted his power in too absolute a tone to be consistent with national independence, the pressure of the times might afford an excuse for submission. Now, however, the position of Rome, and of the bishops of Rome, with relation to the nations of Europe is altogether changed ; and it would seem nothing less than an act of gratuitous folly and unaccountable delusion if the English Church were to submit to the papal rule, when the falsehood of the foundation on which it rests has been exposed, and the errors of the papal system of religion have been completely laid bare for more than three centuries.

While truth compels us to bear testimony to the increase of the papal power in England during the 8th century, it is satisfactory to find, among the records of this period, some proof of the resistance of the English Church to the progress of anti-christian error, in the part which was taken by her divines in the great controversy respecting the worship of images, which arose in that century. The use of images and pictures of holy persons and things in churches, was almost unknown in the earlier ages of Christianity. A practice, which was originally introduced for the purpose of instructing the minds of the vulgar by sensible forms, by degrees led to the error of paying them a certain degree of veneration, which in the 8th century had in the Eastern Church been carried to an extravagant excess. A sense of this induced some of the Eastern emperors, Leo, surnamed the Isaurian, his son Constantine, nicknamed Copronymus, and his grandson Leo IV., to take measures for removing images from the churches and suppressing image worship by force. These proceedings were followed by civil tumults in various parts of the empire, and the opposition to the imperial measures was strongly fomented by the popes Gregory II. and

Gregory III., and chiefly by their instigation the Italian provinces of the Eastern Empire threw off the imperial yoke. A council of bishops assembled at Constantinople, A. D. 754, under Constantine, declared that all *worship* of images was contrary to Scripture and the sense of the Church in the purer ages; that it was idolatry and forbidden by the second commandment. They also maintained that the *use* of images in churches was a custom borrowed from the pagans, that it was of dangerous tendency and ought to be abolished.

In 780, a change took place in the Empire which, as the obsequious clergy of Constantinople generally changed their views according to those of their rulers, led to a different determination of this question of images. The empress Irene, guardian of her infant son, being anxious to establish her authority, having entered into a league with the Pope Adrian, assembled another council at Nice, A.D. 786, commonly known by the name of the Second Nicene Council. By this synod, (at which two papal envoys were present) the laws of the emperors and the decrees of the former council about images were abrogated. It was decreed that the cross and the images of Christ, Mary, the angels, and the saints, were entitled to the worship of veneration, τιμητικὴ προσκύνησις; that it was proper to kiss them, to burn incense to them, and to light up candles and lamps before them; yet, that they were not entitled to divine worship, λατρεία properly so called.[1] The report of the proceedings of this council, although approved by the pope, kindled a flame throughout the churches of the West. Whether this decree of the council was rightly understood or not, the arguments of those who took a lead in its proceedings were interpreted to mean that the same worship was to be paid to images as to the Holy Trinity.

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[1] Gibbon, chap. xlix.; Soames's Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 154—157.

In 792 Charlemagne transmitted a copy of the Nicene decrees to England, where they met with the same opposition as in France and Germany. It is said that Alcuin composed an epistle in the name of the Anglo-Saxon bishops and princes in refutation of the doctrine of the decrees, which he took to Charlemagne.[1] That monarch himself wrote or caused to be written on the same side of the question, a treatise which has come down to us under the name of the Caroline Books. This work he sent to the Pope, who published a formal answer to it. Charlemagne, however, though a great friend of popes, was resolved on this occasion not to be put down by papal authority. He assembled at Frankfort a council of bishops belonging to the different countries under his sway, at which assembly legates from the Pope were present. This council determined in favour of the doctrine of the Caroline Books, condemning the Nicene decrees, and deciding that, while images were to be retained in churches as ornamental and instructive, yet no kind of worship whatever was to be given to them.[2] Thus was a victory gained over anti-christian error, though supported by the Papacy; and it is some satisfaction to find that the English Church, notwithstanding its recent acts of submission to Rome, was on this occasion on the side of the truth. The English bishops showed not long afterwards that the decrees of the second Nicene council were not regarded in England, by enacting at another council of Calcuith, held under archbishop Wulfred, A. D. 816, that it was not necessary, as the Nicene synod had determined, that relics of martyrs should be deposited in a new church at its consecration. Whenever such relics could not be found, it was sufficient to deposit portions of the consecrated elements of the Eucharist instead.[1]

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[1] Hoveden, Simeon of Durham, and Matthew of Westminister, quoted by Mr. Soames, Bampton Lectures, 171., and Dr. Lingard, vol. ii. p. 297. The story rests on doubtful evidence, but there seems to be some foundation for it; and there can be no doubt that Alcuin approved of the doctrine of the Caroline Books, and probably had some share in the composition of that work. Neander, vol. v. p. 324. note.

[2] Soames's Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 159. note.

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[1] Johnson's Canons, i. p. 301.; Collier, vol. i. p. 352. The rejection of the decrees of the second Nicene Council in England is spoken of by some writers, as if it had been accompanied with words expressive of indignation against image-worship as a thing, "which God's Church execrates." This seems to be a mistake, as the words quoted are those of the chronicler Hovenden, recording the fact in the 13th century.

CHAP. VIII.

THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH OF THE NINTH CENTURY FROM THE UNION OF THE SAXON KINGDOMS UNDER ONE HEAD, TO THE DEATH OF ALFRED.

THE earlier part of the 9th century witnessed a great change in the political condition of the Anglo-Saxon states. We have noticed, in the course of this history, that the independence of the eight kingdoms was nominal rather than real, the more powerful rulers, as those of Northumbria, Mercia, or Wessex, generally having dominion over the weaker. During the 8th century there was a continual struggle between Mercia and Wessex for the supremacy, which in the beginning of the 9th century was finally decided in favour of the latter under the reign of Egbert. This prince came to the throne A.D. 800, and having reigned nearly a quarter of a century, seized a favourable opportunity for destroying the supremacy of Mercia over the Southern States and East Anglia. Having subdued the whole of the country to the south of the Humber, Egbert next turned his arms against Northumbria, which state at once submitted without resistance, so that A.D. 828 he was acknowledged as the first king of all England.[1]

The sovereigns of the minor kingdoms were generally henceforth regarded as vassals and tributaries of the king of Wessex; but the loss of a nominal independence was amply compensated by the advantage arising to these states from an union under one head, at a time when the lives, liberties, and religion of all were threatened by the incursions of a new and terrible enemy, the Northmen or Danes.

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[1] Lappenberg, vol. ii. pp. 1—7.

The descent of these pirates upon the English coast had commenced before the end of the 8th century, but it was not till the reign of Egbert, that they began to excite the attention and to call into activity the full power of the united Anglo-Saxon state. Their origin, as well as the precise cause of their wanderings, is involved in much obscurity. Suffice it to say, that for two whole centuries and upwards, Norway, Denmark, and its adjacent islands, and the peninsula of Jutland, poured forth numberless bands of fierce and cruel marauders, who ravaged with unceasing perseverance the coasts of England, Ireland, Scotland, France, and even carried their arms as far as Italy and Sicily. In France and Apulia they acquired permanent settlements under the name of Normans, and became a Christian and civilised people. But the invaders of England were the most ruthless and barbarous of pagans, and seldom has a greater scourge been inflicted by Heaven upon an unhappy nation, than the murderous incursions of these enemies of all that was good and holy were to our Saxon ancestors. At first their attacks seem to have been less directed against England itself than against the opposite shores of Flanders, Holland, and Ireland, where (especially in islands at the mouths of large rivers) they acquired some strong settlements, from which they sailed on their piratical expeditions. Modern historians have ascribed the migrations of the Northmen in a great measure to the conquest of the North of Germany by Charlemagne.

" The subjugation of Germany" (says Gibbon) "withdrew the veil which had so long concealed the continent or islands of Scandinavia from the knowledge of Europe, and awakened the torpid courage of their barbarous natives. The fiercest of the Saxon idolaters escaped from the Christian tyrant to their brethren of the North ; the ocean and Mediterranean were covered with their piratical fleets ; and Charlemagne beheld with a sigh the destructive progress of the Normans, who in less than seventy years precipitated the fall of his race and monarchy."[1]

The earlier expeditions of the Northmen against England were undertaken obviously for the sake of plunder only, and the marauders, having obtained their object, made a speedy retreat. One of the most noted of these took place in 793, in which the venerable church of Lindisfarne, on the coast of Northumbria, the burial-place of the sainted Cuthbert, and the renowned seat of so many pious missionary bishops, was plundered and destroyed, and its helpless inmates, both male and female, were cruelly massacred or led into captivity. Soon afterwards the noble monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, the foundations of the worthy Benedict Biscop, the latter of which had fostered the piety and learning and witnessed the death of the venerable Bede, shared the same unhappy fate.

The wanderers, however, were not long contented with mere piratical expeditions for the sake of plunder. In the reign of Egbert they evidently looked to the more important object of acquiring a new settlement in so fair a land as England. The battles fought by the Danes against that monarch were contests for supremacy. The first ten years of the reign of his son and successor, Ethelwulf, were entirely occupied in war against them. Wessex, Northumbria, and Kent in succession had their coasts invaded by the swarming hosts of pirates, who in the year 855 for the first time wintered in the Isle of Sheppey.[2] After this some cessation of their incursions took place, and Ethelwulf, a pious but superstitious prince (who had been educated by Swithun, the celebrated Bishop of Winchester), availed himself of this interval to make a pilgrimage to Rome. He had previously sent thither his youngest son Alfred (afterwards the most renowned of Anglo-Saxon kings) with a train of nobles and vassals, who, though only a boy, was anointed as king by the Pope Leo IV. What the object of this anointing was does not appear, as Alfred did not succeed his father till after the death of all his brothers. It is probable that this journey produced important effects on the young prince's mind, by implanting in it thus early a deep reverence for the Roman see. Two years later Ethelwulf himself set out for Rome, taking Alfred with him. He spent a whole year there in exercises of devotion, and contemporary historians have celebrated the pious munificence which he displayed, not only by his costly gifts of gold and jewels and silk to the Church, but by his liberality to the Anglo-Saxon school in Rome, which he restored after its destruction by fire.[1] Ethelwulf's bounty was not restricted to foreign churches. He had, previously to his departure from England, with the consent of his witan, by charter, freed from all secular burdens (except the inevitable three) the tenth part of the lands of inheritance which were previously unenfranchised, whether in the possession of men or women, clergy or laymen, in order that the holders of such lands might pray for him with less interruption.[2] He seems also to have given a tenth part of his own private estates of book land to various thanes and clerical establishments. And thirdly, by his will, made after his return from Rome, and a little before his death, he charged the heirs to his lands of inheritance with the obligation of supplying with food and drink and clothing one poor man for every ten hides of land, and also of sending yearly to Rome three hundred mancuses[1]; one-third of which sum was to be for the personal use of the Pope, one-third to supply oil for the lamps in St. Peter's Church at the evening and midnight service on Easter Eve, and the remaining third for the same purpose in the Church of St. Paul.

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[1] Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. xlix.; Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 17.

[2] Saxon Chronicle.

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[1] Lappenberg, vol. ii. pp. 25, 26.; Malmsbury, Kings of England, lib. ii. cap. 2.

[2] Compare Kemble, vol. ii. pp. 484—489., with Lingard, vol. i. pp. 246—248.

In the reign of Ethelred, the third in succession from Ethelwulf, the kingdom again began to suffer more than ever from the attacks of the Danes, who now obtained a permanent footing in the country. In 866 they landed in East Anglia, whence they proceeded to Northumbria, where they obtained a settlement, the inhabitants of Bernicia being compelled to receive a king of their appointment.[2] Having, in the following years, made great ravages in Mercia and East Anglia, they made an incursion, in 869, into Lincolnshire, and destroyed the noble monastery of Bardney. Their progress was stoutly opposed by Algar, the ealdorman of the district, who defeated the Danish army, and slew some of their kings. In the night after this victory, however, a considerable reinforcement, under a chief of the name of Guthrum, arrived at the Danish camp. Another battle ensued, in which the Anglo-Saxon army, after a desperate resistance, was totally destroyed. This victory opened a way for the barbarians to the wealthy monastery of Croyland. They burst into the church in the middle of divine service, and slew Theodore, the aged abbot, at the altar, while performing high mass; and either beheaded or tortured in the most cruel manner the rest of the monks. The very monuments of the dead were rifled for the sake of the costly jewels entombed with them, and their remains scattered about. The monastery itself was reduced to ashes. The monasteries of Medeshamstede (the modern Peterborough) and Ely suffered a similar fate. The former of these possessed a valuable library, which was destroyed. In the latter great treasures had been deposited, for safety, from the neighbouring country. In each some feeble attempt at defence was made, but in vain — every soul belonging to these establishments was cruelly massacred; the nuns, after suffering the foulest indignities, perished either by the sword or in the flames.

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[1] Lingard, vol. i. p. 283.; Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 28. The mancus was the eighth part of a pound.

[2] Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 33.

Soon after this East Anglia fell entirely into the hands of the Danes, and the royal dignity of the country was assumed by Guthrum, one of their kings. They next turned their arms against Wessex, the seat of supreme sovereignty. A series of bloody contests ensued, with various success, in which Ethelred, the king, assisted most powerfully by his brother Alfred, stoutly maintained the independence of his native land.

On the death of Ethelred, in 871, Alfred, in conformity with the law of the Anglo-Saxon monarchy (which was partly elective), was, by general consent, called to the throne of Wessex; and his reign was, as it were, the commencement of a new era in the history of England. He was not, indeed, at once successful in delivering his countrymen from their ruthless foes. Even in Wessex the contest was for a while doubtful, though a temporary respite was procured by a treaty, by which the Danes undertook to evacuate the country. Their departure from Wessex led to the complete subjugation of Northumbria and Mercia, in each of which provinces they set up kings of their own. Subsequent events showed that they paid no great regard to treaties; and in a few years Wessex was again attacked on all sides. Alfred, with a few of his nobles and vassals, was obliged to take refuge among the woods and marshes of Somersetshire, where he spent the winter months. Emerging from this retreat, after a while, he was enabled to raise a fortress at the isle of Athelney, not far from Taunton, which served as a place of resort for his faithful followers, and also as a convenient spot from which he could annoy the enemy. The result of this campaign was a treaty, by which Guthrum, with thirty of his officers, openly embraced Christianity, Alfred himself acting as sponsor on the occasion of their baptism. Guthrum was afterwards acknowledged as King of East Anglia, and the relations of the Saxon and Danish inhabitants of the kingdom were accurately defined, and their rights, both civil and religious, guarded by penal sanctions. By a subsequent treaty between the successors of Alfred and Guthrum, fines were imposed for the withholding of tithes and other ecclesiastical dues; a regulation which shows that Christianity was, even within the Danish territories, regarded as the religion of the State.[1]

The character of Alfred occupies by far the most distinguished place in one of the darkest periods of our history, and would have been most remarkable in any other period. He stands before us, not only as the successful conqueror, both by land and by sea, of fierce and implacable enemies — to his name belong the more lasting glories of the restorer of learning, the Christian lawgiver, and reformer. And if we find his merits in these respects mixed with some alloy of superstition, let us consider the gross and abject barbarism of the age, and be thankful that so many Christian institutions survived the incursions of the heathen Danes, through the zeal and wisdom of Alfred. His own infancy, we are told, so suffered from the prevailing ignorance, that it was not till the age of twelve that he learned to read. His biographer and intimate friend, Asser, Bishop of Sherborne, tells us that the desire of learning which afterwards distinguished him, first displayed itself on the following occasion.

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[1] Lappenberg, vol. ii. pp. 36—63.; Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 135. 167. 172.

His mother one day showed him and his brothers a volume of Saxon poetry, a beautifully illuminated manuscript, which she promised to give to him among them who could first learn to read it. Alfred, though the youngest, at once set to work to master its contents; and by his diligence and perseverance won the prize. For a time his reading was confined to the daily services of the Church, with a selection of psalms and collects, entered in a small volume, which he carried about his person on all occasions. This was the sum of his literary attainments when he became king. Other books were read to him by his chaplains, of whom Asser was one; who also entered in the king's private book such passages as particularly struck his fancy. In these ways, by degrees, a desire of study was awakened, which could not be satisfied until Alfred had made himself acquainted with the Latin tongue, and was able to write and translate works for the improvement of his subjects. This now became, from the peculiar character of the times, an object of essential importance in the eyes of a Christian statesman. The attacks of the Danes had been chiefly directed against the seats and monuments of learning; and the want of security of life and property which prevailed during the half century that preceded Alfred's reign, was of itself a great hindrance to the cultivation of the arts of peace, and was utterly destructive to learning. Alfred himself feelingly describes this state of things in a letter which has been preserved[1]: — "There was a time when foreigners sought wisdom and learning in this island. Now we are compelled to seek them in foreign lands. Such was the general ignorance among the English, that there were very few on this side the Humber (and I dare say not many on the other) who could understand the service in English, or translate a Latin epistle into their own language. So few were they, that I do not recollect a single individual to the south of the Thames, who was able to do it when I ascended the throne." To supply this extraordinary deficiency, he determined to seek the aid of the learned men of other countries. At his invitation, the presbyter John, a native of Old Saxony; Grimbald, a priest, provost of St. Omer's; and Asser, a Welsh priest of the church of St. David's (afterwards Bishop of Sherborne), settled at the English court; and, with the assistance of Plegmund, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Werfrith, Bishop of Worcester, and the priests Werewulf and Ethelstan, formed a body of preceptors for the Anglo-Saxon nobility.[1]

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[1] Letter to Wulfsige, bishop of Sherborne, ap. Lingard, vol. ii. p. 244.

The king's progress in his own studies suggested to him another expedient for reviving learning in England, by translating approved works of Latin writers into the native tongue. He accordingly himself translated the Pastoral of Pope Gregory into English, and sent a copy of the work to every cathedral in his dominions, with an æstel (probably a sort of book-stand) worth fifty mancuses: adding a solemn prohibition against the removal of the æstel from the book, or of the book from the minster, except in case of the bishop wishing to study it privately, or of other persons wishing to transcribe it.[2]

Alfred also translated into English the history of Orosius, a Christian writer of the 5th century; Boethius on the Consolation of Philosophy; and Bede's Ecclesiastical History. A translation of the Psalms is said to have been begun by him, which he was prevented by death from finishing.[3]

But books were of no use, unless the people were sufficiently instructed to read and understand them. Alfred thought that all the sons of freemen, who had the means of maintaining themselves, should apply their minds to learning while they had no other employment. With this view he established a school for the education of the rising generation, in which he placed his own son Ethelward, and exhorted his thanes to follow his example. The benefits of the school were not limited to youths of royal or noble birth; the children of the humbler classes of society were also admitted as scholars —all were instructed in the arts of reading and writing, and many in the Latin grammar. The school was intended by its founder to be a means of promoting general education through the kingdom; and though it appears to have come to an end after his death, it cannot be supposed that the good seed of sound knowledge thus sown was altogether wasted, so as to produce no good or lasting fruits.[1]

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[1] Alfred is also said to have held friendly intercourse with John Scotus, commonly called Erigena, the most famous dialectician of his time. Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 70.

[2] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 249., and notes. Three of the copies sent out by the king are still preserved in the British Museum.

[3] Malmsbury, Kings of England, lib. ii. cap. 4.

If learning suffered so severely from the Danish invasions of England, we can hardly be surprised at finding that both morals and religion suffered even more. During the long contest which had taken place between the two nations, little attention could possibly be paid among the Anglo-Saxons to the ordinary administration of justice: habits of constant warfare had produced the bitter fruits of neglect of industry, rapine, violence, and uncontrolled licentiousness. The discipline of the Church, and the precepts of the Gospel were alike despised, and men gave themselves up, without shame, to the perpetration of the grossest acts of iniquity. The moral and religious state of the Anglo-Saxons was further contaminated by the intermixture of naturalized Danes, whom the policy of Alfred substituted for the old inhabitants cut off by thousands during those desolating wars. These Danish colonists were nominally Christian, inasmuch as they had received the rite of baptism; but their addiction to heathen charms and the practice of magical arts showed that the inclination of their hearts was to their ancient forms of paganism, which many of them still openly professed. To counteract the bad effects which must necessarily arise from such a variety of moral evils existing in the country, was an object worthy of the noblest Christian philanthropy, and of a statesman and lawgiver such as Alfred. He accordingly compiled a new code, which, having been approved by the nation, was solemnly enacted as the law of the land. This code opens rather abruptly, with these words, from the 20th chapter of Exodus: — "The Lord spake these words to Moses, and thus said: 'I am the Lord thy God. I led thee out of the land of the Egyptians, and of their bondage. Love thou not other strange gods above me.'" Then follow the commandments from the third to the ninth inclusive. The tenth commandment is thus given: "Covet thou not thy neighbour's goods unjustly," and is followed by this prohibition, taken from Exodus, xx. 23.: "Make thou not to thyself golden or silver gods."[1]

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 251. To Alfred also has been ascribed the honour of the first foundation of the University of Oxford. See the authorities quoted by Collier, vol. i. pp. 397, 398.; Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. iii. p. 524.

The omission of the second commandment from this list has been remarked by Protestant writers, as an attempt to suppress, out of deference to the Church of Rome, a prohibition utterly irreconcilable with the practice of that Church with respect to images. On the other hand, it is alleged that Alfred was making, "not a copy of the decalogue, but an abridgment of the whole chapter; and therefore would pass by those passages, the meaning of which was contained in other passages."[2] But the validity of this argument must depend on the question, whether the prohibition to bow down before graven images and worship them is necessarily implied in the prohibition taken from Exodus, xx. 23. It is certainly not so obviously implied in it as to show a simple unlearned man that the practice of bowing before images is contrary both to the spirit and letter of that command. Therefore an omission of the words of the second commandment from a professed summary of the whole chapter is calculated to deceive, though we naturally feel unwilling to impute intentional deceit to Alfred, who, in this respect, only followed the teaching of his spiritual instructors.

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[1] Thorpe, vol. i. p. 45.

[2] Cf. Soames's Anglo-Saxon Church, p. 152.; Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 418—420.

After the prohibition against making golden or silver gods, follow thirty-eight dooms or laws, which, with some variations and omissions, are taken from the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd chapters of Exodus; or at least express the same meaning as those portions of the Jewish law. These laws, we are told, that God spake Himself to Moses; and that, after the only begotten Son of the Lord our God, that is our Saviour, Christ, came on earth, He said that He came not to break nor to forbid these commandments, but with all good to increase them; and mercy and humility He taught.[1] Reference then is made to the mission of the Apostles for the conversion of the heathen; and the letter written by the Apostles and Elders from the Council of Jerusalem to the Gentile converts in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, is quoted at length, as prescribing forbearance from worshipping of idols, from tasting blood or things strangled, and from fornication.[2] It is afterwards declared that synods of holy bishops had ordained, out of that mercy which Christ had taught, that secular lords, with their leave, might, without sin, take, for almost every misdeed, for the first offence, the money-bot (or compensation) which they then ordained, except in cases of treason against a lord, to which they dared not assign any mercy, because God Almighty adjudged none to them who despised Him; nor did Christ, the Son of God, adjudge any to him who sold Him to death.

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[1] Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 47—57.

[2] Acts, xv. 23--29

Of the dooms that follow, selected from the laws of former Anglo-Saxon kings, "forty-three concern oaths and sureties; the prosecution of private feuds and deeds of violence, robbery, and murder; and determine, at the same time, the bot or compensation, to which the offender should, in every case, be liable. Then follow thirty-four articles, chiefly extracted from the laws of Ethelbert, enumerating with minute exactness the injuries which may be inflicted on the person, and assigning a separate bot for each injury."[1] The whole concludes with a code of seventy-six chapters, formerly enacted by King Ine, and to which we have referred already.

But Alfred was not only a legislator; he was a zealous and active administrator of the law. In him the poor had a friend who would never sell or deny justice. Such was the ignorance of the ordinary judges of the land, that he was obliged to give them continual instructions as to the performance of their duty. Such was their corruption, that he found it necessary to take the most severe measures against them, so that no less than forty-four cases are mentioned in which he visited their evil practices with the punishment of death.[2]

We have already spoken of the bad effects upon learning and religion produced by the Danish invasions, through the destruction of the monasteries. The same period beheld great changes in the monastic system in England, which ended in its temporary extinction. During the previous century the piety and morals of both monks and nuns had sadly degenerated from the strictness of the ancient discipline, so that the decrees of more than one council of that age were directed against the worldly vanities of those who had professed to have renounced the world.[1] Again, the admission of monks to holy orders had led to their abandoning the monastic rule, and embracing that of regular canons. These canons considered themselves bound by their rule to reside within the precincts of the monasteries, to meet daily in the church for divine service, to take their meals in the same common hall, and to sleep in the same dormitory. The invasion of the Danes dispersed these fraternities, the members of which either adopted the married state or a life of worldly pleasure and licentiousness. When the restoration of tranquillity invited the survivors amongst them to return to their monasteries, they were unwilling again to submit to the restraints of the ancient discipline. Dividing among themselves the revenues of their churches, they lived in separate families, and thought it a sufficient discharge of their duty if they assisted in the daily service; or, in some instances, they performed this office by deputy; and retiring to the farms attached to their prebends, absented themselves from their churches altogether.

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 243.; Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 59—101.

[2] Lappenberg, vol. ii. pp. 66—68.

In the meantime the monastic order gradually became extinct. The remnant of the possessions of the monasteries, which had escaped the plundering hands of the Danes, was seized by the Anglo-Saxon princes, to defray the expenses of the war. Many of the monks embraced secular professions; a few made ineffectual efforts to revive an institution which the warlike spirit of the times rejected with scorn, as fit only for mercenaries and slaves. Such was the state of things when Alfred attempted to restore the monastic discipline, by founding a monastery at Athelney, the place where he had retreated from the Danes. Vainly did he endeavour to persuade any of his subjects to join the new institution; he was compelled to people it with a body of foreign monks, under John, of Old Saxony. John himself was afterwards barbarously murdered by some members of his own monastery; and though the assassins were discovered and punished, this attempt of Alfred must, upon the whole, be regarded as a failure. He was more successful in the restoration of communities of religious women; a nunnery at Shaftesbury was founded by himself, of which his daughter, Ethelgeove, was the abbess; and another was established at Winchester, by his queen, Alswithe, to which she retired upon her husband's death. Notwithstanding these efforts on the part of Alfred, we find it declared by King Edgar, sixty years later, at the period of the revival of monasticism in England, that, in the times of his predecessors, every monastic establishment, both of men and women, had been abolished.[1] It is probable that in the interval those Englishmen who wished to lead a monastic life either contented themselves with living as anchorets in England, or betook themselves to the most celebrated foreign monasteries.

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[1] See instances in the canons of Cloveshoo and those of each of the Councils of Calcuith, Johnson, vol. i. pp. 252. 268. 302.

In estimating the character of Alfred's ecclesiastical measures, we must bear in mind that, from the influence of early education, as well as from the necessity of his position, he was, through life, a devoted adherent of the papal see. He appears to have kept up a more regular intercourse with Rome than any of his predecessors; and at one period of his reign gifts were sent yearly by him to the popes, from one of whom he obtained an exemption from taxes and tolls for the Saxon school.[2]

While we regret that the greatest among England's kings should have lowered himself by submission to a spiritual tyranny, which is associated in the minds of the most enlightened Englishmen with national disgrace and degradation, we must not forget that the friendship and support of Rome, as the chief seat of the little learning that was left in the world, was necessary for Alfred in his struggle for civilisation against barbarism. We may excuse his devotion to the papacy as, for his age of the world, a comparatively venial error, when we reflect that without him this country would, in all human probability, have relapsed into utter paganism. An acknowledgment of the papal supremacy by a nation at one period of its history, does not prove, as we have observed before, that that nation ought always to submit to the papal yoke. We may, without inconsistency, admit that in such a period of confusion and darkness as commenced with the opening of the 9th century, the subjection of the nations of Western Europe, in matters of religion, to one visible head, may, though founded on usurpation, have been rightly endured, and even joyfully acquiesced in, by Christian kings and statesmen, as a good rather than an evil. This admission can in no way give strength to a title to authority over men's consciences which was originally bad, and which no prescription—which nothing short of a direct revelation from on high, can justify. Or we may regard the Papacy as a system of severe discipline, under which men were to be trained, during the darkness of the middle ages, for the light and liberty which were to dawn upon the world in the 15th century; when the revival of learning and the invention of printing in the West of Europe, were to usher in the Reformation. "After that faith was come, they were no longer to be under a schoolmaster."[1] But while the state of bondage was permitted by Almighty God to continue, we must not find fault with the great men who thought it consistent with national independence to acknowledge a foreign spiritual head; more especially while as yet the principle, afterwards asserted by the popes, of the subjection of the temporal power to the ecclesiastical, was not fully developed. Notwithstanding the

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 258—264.

[2] Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 72.; Saxon Chron. A.D. 887—890.

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[1] Gal. iii. 25.

Italian tendencies of the greatest of Anglo-Saxon kings, we must admire his truly noble and Christian character. We must venerate him, not only as the deliverer of his country, and the legislator of a semi-barbarous people, but as setting an example of private life worthy of all imitation. It is recorded that he assigned one half of the revenue arising from the royal domains to secular, the other to ecclesiastical purposes. The former half, the secular, was subdivided into three portions, one of which was distributed among his warriors and noble thanes, according to their rank; another among the numerous builders and other workmen whom he gathered around him out of foreign nations; a third was for the strangers who flocked to him from all parts. The ecclesiastical half of his revenue was divided into four portions: of which one was for the poor of every nation; the second for his monasteries of Athelney and Shaftesbury; the third for his school for young nobles; the fourth for the neighbouring Saxon churches and monasteries, and occasionally for those of Wales, Ireland, Cornwall, Northumbria, and even France. He showed the same exactness of economy in the distribution of his hours between divine and secular things; and was himself the inventor of a method of measuring time, which served as an ingenious though somewhat rude device for supplying the place of a clock.[1] His complete devotion to a life of usefulness is the more to be admired on account of what we learn from his biographer, that he was weakly in constitution from infancy, and constantly subject to a bodily infirmity of a most painful kind through the most active portion of his career. This infirmity, indeed, as well as the period of adversity through which he had to pass, only tended to strengthen his character. It is probable, however, that it was the means of shortening his life, as he died at the comparatively early age of fifty-three, A.D. 901, having reigned upwards of twenty-nine years. Before we conclude this notice of Alfred, it is right to mention that he was the earliest ruler of England who established any intercourse with the East, by sending gifts to the Christians of St. Thomas, on the Malabar coast of India.[1] It were much to be wished that the transactions of his remote successors, in after ages, with the natives of that country, had been all of an equally pacific and praiseworthy character.

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[1] Lappenberg, vol. ii. pp. 73, 74. Asser tells us that he caused six wax candles to be made of equal weight and length. These he found took exactly twenty-four hours to burn out: and that the consumption of them might not be hurried on, as well as to prevent their being extinguished, he protected them by lanterns of wood and fine horn from the operation of currents of air.

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[1] Saxon Chron. anno 883; Lappenberg, vol. ii. pp. 71, 72. See also Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chap. xlvii.

CHAP. IX.

THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH OF THE TENTH AND ELEVENTH CENTURIES, FROM THE DEATH OF ALFRED TO THE NORMAN CONQUEST.

A.D. 901—1066.

THE reign of Edward the Elder, the eldest son and successor of Alfred, was almost entirely occupied with wars against the Danes. In these he was materially assisted by his sister Ethelflœd, the widow of the regent of Mercia, a woman of extraordinary firmness and heroism. Through their efforts a great part of the territory occupied by the Danes was reconquered, and the Saxon supremacy restored. So formidable did Edward become in arms, that the kings of Wales, Scotland, and Strathclyde, as well as those of Northumbria and the Danish territory in England, acknowledged him as their supreme lord.[1] A reign spent in constant warfare does not offer much matter for ecclesiastical history. It appears, however, that about this time were founded three new bishoprics in the west of England.[2]

William of Malmsbury says that this creation of new sees was in consequence of a bull of pope Formosus, who put the kingdom under an interdict; (*i. e.*, forbade the administration of any religious offices within it), in consequence of the long vacancy of some of the old sees. There are chronological difficulties which prevent us from receiving this account, as pope Formosus died six years before Edward's reign, and it is highly improbable that such a thing should have happened in Alfred's lifetime; but there is no question that the sees of Wells in Somersetshire, Crediton in Devonshire, and St. Germain's in Cornwall, were founded in the early part of this century.

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[1] Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 97.

[2] Malmsbury, Kings of England, lib. iii. and lib. i. cap. 6.; lib. ii. cap. 5.

Edward was succeeded, A.D. 924, by his natural son, Athelstan, who was destined to reap the fruits of his father's and grandfather's victories, by the enjoyment of greater power and influence in foreign courts than had ever been possessed by any of his predecessors.[1] The long period of intestine war, and the intermixture of races in the kingdom, had, however, given rise to much lawlessness and disorder, in the midst of which the rights of property and the due administration of justice were grossly neglected. By an ordinance of king Athelstan, the king's reeves, or bailiffs, are ordered strictly to render tithes from the royal domains, both of live stock and the yearly fruits of the earth; and the bishops, aldermen, and king's reeves are enjoined to do the same out of their own property.[2] The same ordinance contains injunctions, the object of which was to secure the payment of church-shot, soul-shot, and plough-alms; and the king's reeves are ordered to provide for one poor Englishman a certain quantity of food and clothing every month, from two of the king's farms; and if they could not find such an one in their own village, they were to seek him in another. They were also ordered to redeem one "wite-theow," that is, one who, from debt or misfortune, had fallen into slavery.

Athelstan was succeeded by his half-brother, Edmund, whose reign is remarkable for the commencement of the work of the restoration of the monastic system in England.

We have referred, in the last chapter, to the fact that, in the earlier part of the 10th century, all, or nearly all, the English monastic institutions were extinct. There were, however, some eminent Benedictine monasteries in France and Flanders, especially those of Fleury and Ghent; the former of which attained a great celebrity in this age, and attracted within its walls many Englishmen who aspired after the monastic life. Some of these persons afterwards assisted in introducing the discipline of Fleury into their own country. There were, moreover, places noted for their sanctity; where, among the ruins of the old monasteries, individual recluses were permitted to lead a solitary religious life. Such a spot was Glastonbury, where a church had existed even before the conversion of the Saxons, and which was still, in the 10th century, a favourite place of resort for study and devotion to some of the Irish clergy.[1]

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[1] Lappenberg, vol. ii. pp. 108. 110.

[2] Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 195—197.

It was in the neighbourhood of this spot, consecrated by ancient traditions, that Dunstan, the celebrated reviver of monasticism, was born. His parents were noble, and to the advantage of birth he added the more rare and enviable privilege of being as well educated as the times would permit. Under the tuition of the Irish clergy of Glastonbury, he obtained, not only a familiar use of the Latin tongue, but an accurate acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, and a competent knowledge of philosophy; and he was particularly distinguished for his proficiency in music, painting, engraving, and working in metals.[2]

His constitution appears to have been sickly in early life, and a fever, probably occasioned by his constant application to study, brought him nearly to the brink of the grave. In his delirium he is reported by his biographers to have wandered, in a state of phrenzy, all over the country; after which he climbed upon the roof of the church, walked along the top of it, and descended in safety. Having accomplished this strange exploit, he sank upon the church floor in a deep sleep, from which he awoke in a state of returning health.

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[1] Soames's Anglo-Saxon Church, pp. 6, 7. and notes.

[2] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 269.

We cannot be surprised that these circumstances should be recounted as miracles by the marvel-loving writers of his age: to us they are merely proofs of the morbid constitution and excitable temperament of the remarkable person of whom they are told.[1]

Dunstan is said to have been introduced in his youth, by his uncle Athelm, archbishop of Canterbury, to the court of king Athelstan. If this were the case, he did not long remain there: the jealousy of competitors represented him as addicted to magical arts, and compelled him to retire from the paths of political greatness. We next find him at the house of a relative, Elphege, bishop of Winchester, who earnestly pressed him to assume the monastic profession. To this Dunstan at first expressed a decided repugnance. His imagination contemplated with ardour the idea of a matrimonial connexion, and the pleasures of a domestic life; but celibacy and the mortifications of monasticism had as yet for him no charms. Still, whether it was that the recollections of Glastonbury haunted him, or that disappointment had soured his mind, or that he had a presentiment with respect to the course by which he was ultimately to attain to greatness, he could not at once decide in favour of a life of worldly ease and comfort. This state of irresolution continued for some time, and the conflicts which it occasioned at length brought on another dangerous attack of illness. Sickness, however, produced a great change in his mind, and he arose from his bed resolved to embrace that profession which he had before rejected. He received from Elphege the monastic habit, with the order of priesthood, and retired to his beloved Glastonbury, to officiate in the church there.[2]

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[1] Soames's Anglo-Saxon Church, pp. 171, 172.; Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. ii. p. 387.

[2] Turner, vol. ii. pp. 392—4.; Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 270 271

And now, having made his choice, he showed the energy and determination of his character in the manner in which he played the part of a monastic recluse. Such a man as Dunstan could not be an ordinary monk: hence his mortifications and acts of humiliation, by which he aspired to the character of a saint, or sought to subdue the evil of his nature, were far above the common standard of monkish perfection. He dug for himself a sort of subterraneous cave for a cell, which one of his biographers describes as more like a grave than anything else; being of the height of a man's stature, covered with a door, in which was a small aperture for light and air.[1]

In this sepulchral cell he exercised himself in his favourite occupation of working metals; and a vulgar tradition of the next age reports an encounter between Satan and Dunstan, in which the saint seized the Evil Spirit by the nose with his redhot tongs, because he intruded himself to tempt Dunstan while at his work.[2]

His reputation for sanctity now began to spread abroad; and Ethelflede, a widow lady of royal descent and great wealth, paid a visit to the recluse, made him her spiritual adviser, and finally bequeathed her property to him. These riches, however, as well as his patrimonial estate, he distributed among the poor. After a while his ambition was again tempted by a request from king Edmund to visit the court. The consequence of this was, that he was regarded as a worthy object of royal favour, and received from that monarch the investiture of the church and manor of Glastonbury. The king, we are informed, took him by the right hand, kissed him, and leading him to the sacerdotal chair, placed him upon it, with these words:—"Be thou the lord and powerful occupant of this seat, and most faithful abbot of this church."[1]

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[1] Osbern's Life of Dunstan, cited by Turner, vol. ii. p. 396.

[2] Turner, ibid.

The new abbot soon showed his zeal for monachism, by erecting a building into which he introduced a small colony of monks, whom he subjected to the Benedictine rule. His adoption of that rule led some of his biographers to call him the first Benedictine Abbot. We must, however, understand this in a limited sense, as denoting that he was the first abbot of the restored Order of Benedict, whose rule was (as we have seen) in part at least, adopted in the monasteries of Wilfrid and Biscop, in the 7th century.[2]

The favour shown to Dunstan by king Edmund was surpassed by that of his brother and successor Edred, who entrusted the royal treasures to the keeping of the abbot of Glastonbury, and offered him the see of Crediton, or (as some writers say) that of Winchester.

This elevation was declined, but the royal revenues were, with the king's sanction, zealously applied in the erection of new religious structures.[3] On the death of Edred in 955, the ambitious career of Dunstan received a sudden check. His successor, Edwy, a youth of sixteen, of strong passions, gave early offence to the monks and clergy, by marrying Elfgiva, a young lady who was in the eye of the canon law too nearly related to him. Retiring from the boisterous festivities of his coronation to enjoy the society of his young wife[4], Edwy had his privacy rudely invaded by Dunstan, who had been deputed by the assembled nobles to draw the king back to the feast. This mission was accomplished not without some rudeness towards the king's person, and the grossest insults to the lady, whom monkish prejudice would not acknowledge in any other character than that of a mistress. This daring proceeding led at once to an open rupture between Dunstan and the Court. The king demanded the restoration of the treasure deposited at Glastonbury by his predecessor,—a demand which Dunstan found it prudent to elude by flight. Pursued by the emissaries of Elfgiva's mother (who, it is said, had orders to put out his eyes), Dunstan with difficulty escaped to the coast of Flanders, in which country he was kindly received by Arnulf the count, and found refuge in the Abbey of Ghent. His monks were dispersed, and the lands of his monasteries of Glastonbury and Abingdon were sequestrated by the king.[1]

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 272. note.

[2] See Kemble, vol. ii. p. 451. note.

[3] Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 131.

[4] See Kemble, vol. ii. p. 410. note; Saxon Chron. anno 958; Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 132. note.

The flight of Dunstan was soon afterwards followed by a revolution, for which the arbitrary conduct of Edwy afforded some excuse, and which ended in the partition of the kingdom between him and his brother Edgar. By this arrangement, Mercia and Northumbria fell to the share of the latter, the Thames being the boundary of his dominions. Edgar's accession to the throne soon led to the recal of Dunstan, who in 958 received from that prince the see of Worcester, and in 959 that of London. While honours were thus heaped upon the head of the restored abbot of Glastonbury, the unfortunate Edwy had to endure fresh wrongs and insults from the hands of the clergy, who still remained faithful to him. Archbishop Odo, a man who received from his contemporaries the name of "Odo the Good," but whose Danish origin may have somewhat hardened him against the tender feelings of our nature, proceeded to the most cruel extremities against the queen Elfgiva. Not content with forcibly separating her from Edwy, on the ground of near relationship, he caused her to be branded with hot irons in the face, and banished to Ireland. After a while she returned to England; but, falling again into the hands of her persecutors, she was put to death in a barbarous manner, by having the sinews of her legs cut.[1]

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[1] Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 133.

In 960 Archbishop Odo himself died, and his death paved the way to Dunstan's exaltation to the highest dignity which an English subject could attain. Elfsy, bishop of Winchester, was appointed to succeed Odo, but perished of cold on the Alps on his journey to Rome to obtain the pall. Byrthelm, bishop of Sherborne, was then nominated to Canterbury, while Edwy was yet alive; but before he could take possession of the archiepiscopal see Edwy also died. Upon this Edgar, who was now by his brother's death king of all England, set aside the election of Byrthelm, and appointed Dunstan in his place.[2] The elevation of Dunstan to the primacy was followed in 962 by that of Oswald, a zealous Benedictine, to the see of Worcester, and soon afterwards by the appointment of Ethelwold, abbot of Abingdon, a companion and pupil of Dunstan, to the see of Winchester. Oswald was, moreover, in 971, raised to the archiepiscopal see of York, which he held together with that of Worcester. These appointments contributed mainly to the success of that attempt to revive the monastic system in its original severity, which forms the most remarkable feature of the ecclesiastical history of England in the tenth century,—a work which, having been unsuccessfully projected by Alfred, was to a great extent accomplished under Dunstan. The cause of monachism had been gradually progressing in England from the time of Edmund. The succeeding reign witnessed the retirement from the world of an eminent statesman and warrior, Thurcytel, the chancellor to king Edred, who received from that monarch the investiture of the ruined abbey of Croyland, and also regained for that monastery a great part of the lands of which it had been deprived.[1] Dunstan also (as we have observed) made use of the treasures of Edred, which that king had committed to his safe keeping, for the purpose of promoting the monastic system. It was not, however, before the reign of Edgar that monachism made any rapid progress. This prince gave himself up in early youth to unrestrained licentiousness of conduct, as even the monkish historians are obliged to admit. But so great was the influence of Dunstan over him, that he submitted, as it is said, to a severe penance imposed by the archbishop on account of one of his acts of excess, and even abstained for seven years from wearing his crown. His reign was prosperous and peaceful, undisturbed by the inroads of the Northmen, and also distinguished by the strict administration of justice, but it was not free from extraordinary calamities in the shape of pestilence and conflagrations, one of which devastated the city of London, and destroyed St. Paul's cathedral.[2] The zeal with which Edgar supported Dunstan's plans may have been partly the result of the homage which a weaker mind pays to a strong one, with which it frequently comes into contact; but there was no doubt a good excuse for reviving the monastic order, afforded by the great corruptions which seem to have prevailed among the secular clergy. When we read of an archbishop of York rebelling against his sovereign (as did Wulfstan in 943), and joining in an unholy alliance with the pagan Danes[3], we may well believe that a crisis had arrived in ecclesiastical affairs which required strong measures. However this may have been, it is certain that, from an early period of Edgar's reign, the restoration of monasteries was carried on with great success. Upwards of forty monastic establishments are said to have been founded by him.[1] In this number are included several old foundations, which had been either abandoned or secularised, and which were re-established during Edgar's reign. Thus we find that Bishop Ethelwold obtained from the king, the sites of the abbeys of Ely, Thorney, and Medeshamstede, or Peterborough, which had been destroyed by the Danes, and rebuilt them in the same style of splendour which distinguished them before.[2]

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[1] Kemble, vol. ii. p. 410.; Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 134.; Turner, vol. ii. p. 407.

[2] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 282.; Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 136.

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[1] Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 127.

[2] Saxon Chron. anno 962; Supplement to Edgar's Laws; Thorpe, vol. i. p. 271.; Lappenberg, vol. ii. pp. 139. 143, 144.

[3] Saxon Chron. anno 943; Lappenberg, vol. ii. pp. 120. 128.

There was, however, one obstacle to the revival of monachism, which it was by no means easy to overcome. We have referred in the last chapter to the change which took place in the condition of the collegiate clergy, or regular canons, in consequence of the Danish invasions. These fraternities, once dissolved, were unwilling after peace was restored to re-unite according to the obligation of their rule. Living in the world upon the revenues derived from their churches, the services of which they did not even always themselves perform, they acquired the name of secular canons. The attempt to bring these persons under the yoke of the monastic discipline, was a project worthy of the courage and energy of Dunstan, but it occasioned a contest which lasted through a great portion of his life. The idea was probably suggested to him during his exile in Flanders, the monastery in which he resided at Ghent having belonged not long before to a society of secular canons, who were expelled, in consequence of their irregularities, to make way for a community of monks.[3] That similar irregularities might justly be imputed to the

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[1] Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 137. The foundation of one of these appears to have been part of the penance imposed by Dunstan for Edgar's youthful licentiousness. Lingard, vol. ii. p. 284.

[2] Saxon Chron. anno 963.

[3] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 286.

English canons, there seems no reason to question. It is stated concerning the canons of Winchester, that they would observe no rule at all, and that they notoriously disregarded the obligations of morality, by repudiating the wives whom they had unlawfully married, and living with other women.[1] On the other hand, the revivers of monachism were bent upon enforcing the obligation of celibacy upon all the clergy, on the pretence of its being part of the ancient discipline of the Church.

With respect to this question, which occupies such a prominent position in the history of the times, we may observe, that the enforcement of the practice of celibacy upon the clergy was a restriction not known to the ancient Christian Church. Of this there is abundant evidence in the history of the Church before the first Council of Nice.[2] At that council a proposal was made to pass a law to compel the clergy to separate from the wives whom they had married before ordination. This was resisted by Paphnutius, an Egyptian bishop, who contended that marriage was an honourable estate, and that conjugal society was chastity; and the council agreed to leave the matter to every man's own discretion.[3] This principle appears to have been so far maintained in the Eastern Church, that no express law was made against clerical marriages, until the council, (called the Council in Trullo from its place of assembly, the tower of the palace), which met at Constantinople, A. D. 692, and which allowed priests and deacons to live with their wives, but refused this indulgence to married bishops, whose wives were exhorted to betake themselves to a monastic life.[4]

On the other hand, the Roman Church has, from the time of Pope Siricius, A.D. 384, steadily, with more or less success, maintained the necessity of clerical celibacy. The canon which Siricius endeavoured to introduce under the form of a piece of advice to the African Church[1], was by degrees established as an inflexible point of discipline wherever the papal authority prevailed. The extension of the monastic institutions assisted materially in bringing about the same result. It is probable that Pope Gregory intended that celibacy should be the law of the Anglo-Saxon clergy[2]; it is certain that, in consequence of the large share which the monks had in the work of Christianising England, and perhaps from other causes, it did extensively prevail in that country for two hundred and fifty years after Augustine's mission. Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence to show that the practice was not universally observed.[3] The letter of the canons of the 8th century condemned clerical marriages; and though they did not go so far as to annul the contract altogether in such cases, sentence of degradation from holy orders was pronounced against the unfortunate priest or deacon who presumed to despise their sanction.[4] But the tyranny of man was unable, among a high-spirited and independent people, to abrogate a liberty which was given by the law of God, and which concerned the most sacred feelings of human nature. In the 9th century the feeble restraints of papal and synodical decrees were rudely snapped asunder in Saxon England; and from that time to the Norman Conquest, though the practice of clerical celibacy was enjoined by law, and recommended by an overwhelming weight of ecclesiastical authority, it was no longer possible to enforce it by secular penalties. Hence we find this acknowledgment in a celebrated episcopal charge of the latter part of the 10th century: — "Beloved, we cannot now forcibly compel you to chastity (*i. e.*, to abstinence from marriage), but we admonish you, nevertheless, that ye observe chastity so as Christ's ministers ought, in good reputation, to the pleasure of God; as those saints did, whom we before mentioned, who all their lives long lived in chastity."[1] In Dunstan's time, however, the experiment had not been fully made, and he resolved accordingly to try what could be done, by legislative enactment, to restore this neglected branch of discipline. Having procured the sanction both of papal and royal authority for his project, the archbishop caused a council to be assembled, at which the king himself was present. On this occasion, according to some authorities, Edgar delivered a most eloquent harangue, in which he inveighed strongly against the degeneracy of the clergy and the decay of ecclesiastical discipline, and offered, for the remedy of these crying evils, to support the bishops with the aid of the power of the crown. The council decreed that every priest, deacon, and subdeacon should live chastely (*i.e.* separate from his wife and abjure marriage), or resign his benefice; and the execution of this law was entrusted to the zeal of Dunstan, Oswald, and Ethelwold.[2]

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[1] Saxon Chron. anno 963. Life of Ethelwold and Annals of Winchester, cited by Kemble, vol. ii. p. 456.

[2] Bingham, lib. iv. cap. v. secs. 5, 6, 7.

[3] Socrates, lib. i. cap. 11.; Sozomen, lib. i. cap. 23.

[4] Bingham, lib. iv. chap. v. sec. 8.

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[1] Hussey's Rise of the Papal Power, p. 27.

[2] Bede, lib. i. cap. 27.

[3] Kemble, vol. ii. pp. 444, 445.

[4] Egbert's Excerpta; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 125.; Egbert's Penitential; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 196.

With this legislative declaration in favour of clerical celibacy, the archbishop appears to have been content. To what cause his forbearance is to be attributed, we are not informed. The proceedings which followed have been the subject of much controversy; but it seems to be admitted that, whatever degree of violence may have been used towards the secular clergy, Dunstan's coadjutors, rather than Dunstan himself, are to be considered responsible for it.[3]

The chief contest between the fupporters and opponents of celibacy was in the church of Winchester, of which Ethelwold was bishop. The canons of Winchester were some of them highly connected, possessed of great wealth, and living in the immediate vicinity of the royal court. They were accused of refusing to hold any rule at all, and even of disgracing their clerical profession by the greatest wickedness and irregularity of life. Edgar was at first unwilling to listen to Ethelwold's proposal to introduce a body of monks in their place; and suggested the milder expedient that those only should be removed whose lives were most irregular, and that the vacancies should be supplied by the secular priests who performed their clerical duties for them in the cathedral. This plan was accordingly tried, but failed in consequence of the new canons speedily adopting the practices of those whom they succeeded. At length, Ethelwold, having obtained the sanction of Edgar, proceeded to stronger measures. On a certain Saturday in Lent, during the celebration of divine service, he entered the choir, attended by a royal deputy, and throwing down before the astonished canons a bundle of cowls, abruptly told them that the time was come for them to make their choice, whether they would assume the monastic habit or quit the cathedral. Three only consented to the former alternative; the rest retired in sullen discontent, and their places were supplied by a body of monks from Ethelwold's former monastery of Abingdon. Ethelwold proceeded, after a time, to remove the clergy from the new minster of Winchester, which had been founded by Alfred, and completed by his son Edward; as also from the clerical monasteries of Chertsey and Milton. The places of those who were ejected were supplied by monks. Moreover he established in Winchester two new abbeys, one for monks and the other for nuns. These and similar proceedings, in conjunction with his zeal and diligence in restoring the ruined foundations, have justly procured for Ethelwold the title of "the father of monks." Still we must acknowledge that his zeal for the monastic cause was so far tempered with mercy, that he would not permit the ejected canons to starve, but assigned them a sufficient support out of his own episcopal domains.[1]

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[1] Ælfric's Pastoral Epistle; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 376.

[2] Collier, vol. i. p. 445.; Lingard, vol. ii. p. 288.

[3] Compare Lingard, vol. ii. p. 289., with Soames's Anglo-Saxon Church, p. 197., and Kemble, vol. ii. pp. 458—461.

Ethelwold's coadjutor, Oswald, bishop of Worcester, seems to have attained the same end by milder measures. He founded a new church in the neighbourhood of Worcester, which he entrusted to a colony of monks, and frequented the services of it himself. The people were gradually drawn away from the cathedral and the ministrations of the old secular clergy, till at length Wensine, the dean, set the canons the example of taking the monastic habit. Other members of the body followed their dean, and the cathedral, by degrees, but without any violence being used, became, in the course of years, a Benedictine monastery. So gradual, however, was the transition, that charters of this period relating to lands belonging to the church of Worcester are extant, some of which appear to have been signed by secular canons even so late as the year 991.

Oswald is said to have introduced monks in the place of canons in seven churches of his diocese, but it is probable that some of these were altogether new foundations, and that in the rest the change was made with the consent of the canons themselves. In 971 this prelate was made archbishop of York, and, at Dunstan's particular request, he retained the bishopric of Worcester with the archiepiscopal see until his death, on the pretence that the Primate was unable to find another person equal to the task which Oswald had undertaken. It is a remarkable fact, that neither in the cathedral of York, nor in any of the churches belonging to that diocese, was any attempt made to substitute monks for canons. The reason of this is not known, but it has been suggested, with some probability, either that the rights of the canons were too well established to be shaken, or that experience had changed Oswald's mind as to the necessity of the alteration, and convinced him that his youthful zeal had, with respect to this matter, somewhat outrun discretion. It is to be observed, moreover, that Winchester and Worcester were the only cathedrals in which this change was accomplished during Edgar's reign. Even in Dunstan's own cathedral of Canterbury no attempt was made to disturb the canons, until they were dispossessed, after the lapse of several years, under archbishop Ælfric.[1]

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 292.; Kemble, vol. ii. pp. 456. 461. The latter writer supposes that the canons were not in fact deprived of their prebends, but only expelled from the cathedral and collegiate buildings.

A farther attempt was made during this reign to consolidate the new power thus acquired by the monastic bodies, by giving the monks, in certain cases, a right to elect a bishop. At a council held at Winchester it was enacted that in the conventual cathedrals the monks should, in case of the vacancy of the see, choose their bishop from their own or some neighbouring monastery, according to the directions of their rule respecting the election of abbots, but with the consent and advice of the king.[2]

Edgar, in whose reign these changes chiefly took place, was not merely a founder or restorer of monasteries ; he had other grounds upon which he might claim to be considered as a benefactor of the Church, which more particularly affected the secular clergy. His laws provided, that the tithe of young animals should be paid by Pentecost, and that of the fruits of the earth by the equinox, and kirkshot by Martinmas ; and to show his devotion to the Roman see, the Romeshot, or hearthpenny, was ordered to be paid by St. Peter's mass day, August 1st. Whosoever had not paid his Romeshot by that time, was ordered to go to Rome, and to pay thirty pence there besides, and to pay a fine to the king on his return of a hundred and twenty shillings. A second refusal to pay this impost was visited with similar penalties, and an increased fine to the king; a third refusal involved the forfeiture of all that the defaulter possessed. Whatever we may think of such legislation as this, there are other things established by these canons of Edgar, which deserve all praise. In an age of rudeness and barbarism, it was a wise provision that every priest should diligently learn a handicraft; in an age of gross spiritual darkness, it is pleasing to find enactments, which made it obligatory on every Christian man zealously to accustom his children to Christianity, and teach them the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and to be himself expert in the knowledge of those fundamental articles of true religion, if he would lie in consecrated ground after death, or be esteemed worthy of the Holy Communion while yet alive.[1]

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 289, 290. ; Kemble, vol. ii pp. 459—465. ; Saxon Chron. anno 995.

[2] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 298.

The death of Edgar, which took place A.D. 975, led to the renewal of troubles by the revival of the dispute between the monks and secular clergy. His successor, Edward, was a mere boy, the commencement of whose reign was disturbed by the revolt of Alfere, Duke of Mercia, who proceeded without scruple to eject the monks by force from some of the principal monasteries of that province. To save the country from the horrors of civil war, the chiefs of the two parties were induced to attend a council at Winchester, at which the respective claims of the contending bodies might be discussed. Through the influence of Dunstan, and his friends, the monks once more obtained the victory; and the superstition of the age, not content with recording the fact, has added the fabulous embellishment of the deliberations of the council having been influenced by a supernatural voice uttering from a crucifix in the wall these words; — "God forbid it to be done, God forbid it to be done; you have judged well, to change would not be well." This tale has been properly rejected by modern writers, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, but the former have not shown equal judgment in their remarks upon an incident which happened at the Council of Calne, in 978, at which the question at issue between the two parties was again formally discussed. On this occasion, Beornhelm, a Scottish bishop, attended as the advocate of the ejected canons, and had stated their case with some power and eloquence, when the deliberations of the council were brought to a sudden termination by an accident, which might naturally occur during a rude period of architecture. The floor of the building gave way, and a considerable number of persons either were badly wounded or perished in the ruins, — but it so happened, that the beam, on which Dunstan stood, remained firm. While we refuse to see anything miraculous in this story, we must equally reject the notion of any contrivance on Dunstan's part, as alike improbable, inconsistent with the accounts of contemporary writers, and unjust to the memory of that eminent man, because it involves a charge of clumsy and unnecessary cruelty. The occurrence, however, was regarded in that age, as a declaration of Heaven in favour of Dunstan's party, and, therefore, we may consider the result of the Council of Calne as a triumph to the cause of the monks.[1]

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[1] Johnson's Canons, vol. i. pp. 409, 410. 414–416.; Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 247. 249. 264, 265.

King Edward was soon afterwards murdered by his stepmother, and his name (probably from his supposed bias towards the monastic party) has been enrolled in the calendar as a martyr. He was succeeded by his half-brother Ethelred, the misfortunes of whose disastrous reign are said to have been predicted by Dunstan when he crowned him. It required, however, no prophetic spirit to foresee, that the reign of a minor, threatened as the kingdom then was by a new irruption of the Danes from the north of Europe, would be calamitous to his country. The year after Ethelred's succession, 980, was marked by descents of Danes upon the coasts of Southampton, Kent, and Cheshire; and, in the two following years, Devonshire and Dorsetshire suffered from the same evil. From some cause or other, which is involved in obscurity, fresh swarms of pirates issued from the Scandinavian kingdoms, while the newly established settlement of Northmen in Normandy, began now also to send forth invaders upon the south-western coasts of Britain.[1] Not long after this renewal of troubles from without, England was deprived of the great statesman, who had so long influenced the counsels of her sovereigns, and who seemed to be the person most able to cope with the coming danger.

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 301. ; Soames, Ang. Sax. Church, p. 202. note ; Lappenberg, vol. ii. 147. ; Sax. Chron. anno 978 ; Malmsbury, Kings of England, lib. ii. cap. 9.

Dunstan performed the public service in his cathedral for the last time on Ascension Day, A.D. 988. On this occasion he preached with unwonted energy on the incarnation of the Saviour, the redemption of man, and the bliss of heaven, but expressed his conviction that his end was approaching. The remainder of that day, and the next, he spent in exercises of devotion, and in giving advice to those who visited him; and on the third day, shortly after receiving the Holy Communion, he expired in the sixty-fourth or sixty-fifth year of his age.[2]

Dunstan would probably have been remarkable in any period, and, in comparison with the times in which he lived, he may well be regarded as a great man. His civil administration is said to have been severe, especially in the case of those who used fraudulent weights and measures, or who uttered false money. As an ecclesiastic, he was diligent in study, the reading of Holy Scriptures, and the correction of manuscripts, and his eloquence was the admiration of his contemporaries. As a bishop, he was faithful in the charge of his own diocese, as a metropolitan, vigilant in taking care that other bishops did their duty.[1] The great work of his primacy was undoubtedly the revival of monachism, and about the merits of this there has been, and probably ever will be, much controversy. Perhaps we shall not be far wrong, if we regard it as the best, if not the only, expedient which could be devised for the preservation of religion and civilisation in an age of the grossest darkness. When we consider what Dunstan's early training was, we cannot wonder that after he had attained to the height of power as Edgar's minister, and Primate of England, he should forward a work, which possibly may have been necessary for the preservation of the State. It is impossible indeed to justify, upon the principles of the Gospel, the severe enactments against the married clergy. To forbid marriage to any class of citizens seems to be an act of abominable tyranny, and is expressly condemned by the prophetic denunciations of the Apostle of the Gentiles.[2] To make the union of the sexes absolutely unlawful where the man happens to be in holy orders, and to put it on the same footing in the class of offences as murder (for such was the merciful tenour of one of Edgar's laws)[3], is to confound right and wrong, and to raise the fanciful provisions of human enactments above the eternal and immutable laws of God. But apart from the proceedings against the married clergy, the character of which probably has been much misrepresented by the passions of ancient, and the prejudices of modern writers, it is possible to contemplate the revival of monachism with some degree of indulgence, if not of approbation. We must not forget that the restoration of the monastic system afforded a refuge for the remnant of learning that survived to this age, and was the means of raising up, in after ages, schools of the fine arts, the influence of which is still felt among us, in the existence of our noble ancient churches, and those glorious cathedrals, which are the pride of England. Dunstan himself was, as we have observed before, no mean proficient in the arts which tend to the refinement of society, being a skilful artist, a musician, painter, and workman in metals. The knowledge, which he had acquired at Glastonbury from his Irish teachers, he liberally imparted to others also, and thus was the means of diffusing useful learning around. Ethelwold, his pupil, made a practice, even after he had become a bishop, of giving instruction in grammar to boys and young men; and masters were distributed from his school to different monasteries. Even in this age some scholars were produced, who attained considerable notoriety, the most remarkable of whom was Ælfric the homilist, of whom we shall have occasion to speak more particularly hereafter.[1]

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[1] Sax. Chron. A.D. 980, 981, 982.; Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 151—153.

[2] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 304—306.

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 306, 307.

[2] 1 Tim. iv. 3.

[3] Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 273.; Johnson's Canons, vol. i. p. 437.

Before we conclude our notice of Dunstan, it is right to mention a remarkable proof of his fearless love of truth, which led him to brave the displeasure, and slight the mandate of no less a person than the Pope himself. A nobleman of high rank had contracted a marriage with a near relation, which was regarded as incestuous by the laws of the Church. Dunstan having repeatedly warned the offender in vain, proceeded to pass sentence of excommunication against him. The nobleman, who was a favourite of Edgar, ventured to despise the anathema of the metropolitan, and appeal to the Papal See. The Pope ordered Dunstan to revoke the censure, and restore the culprit to the communion of the Church. To this mandate the Primate opposed the most determined resistance, declaring that he would obey only in case of the offender showing repentance for his sin, and that nothing should induce him to transgress the divine law for the fear of man. The result was that the nobleman himself gave way, separated from the unlawful object of his affection, consented to ask forgiveness at a public synod, and then, but not till then, was restored to the communion of the Church.[1]

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 310, 311.

The period that ensued, from the death of Dunstan to the Norman conquest, was, for the most part, a period of darkness and general calamity, and peculiarly barren of events in the church history of England.

The gloomy presage, which had been entertained in Ethelred's infancy, was amply fulfilled by the rapid succession of misfortunes throughout his disastrous reign. The constant repetition of the invasions of the Northmen led to an expedient (first suggested, it is said, by Sigeric, Archbishop of Canterbury, and renewed repeatedly afterwards) of buying peace from them by the payment of a large sum of money.[2] The invaders soon became settlers, and Ethelred, a prince whose moral character was such as to deprive him of the respect of his countrymen, did not scruple to make an attempt to get rid of them by an extensive massacre. This atrocious deed only led to fresh invasions, which were encouraged alike by the weakness of the sovereign and the treachery of the nobles. In one of these the city of Canterbury was betrayed by the faithless conduct of Œlfmaer, abbot of St. Augustine's, into the hands of the enemy, the cathedral was destroyed, and Elphege, the archbishop, was wounded and cast into prison. At the end of seven months the sum of 3000 pounds of silver was demanded for his ransom, and, when he refused to pay, he was butchered in the most barbarous manner by his infuriated enemies.[3] After some years of continual wars and confusion, Cnut, the king of Denmark, was acknowledged by the Anglo-Saxon witan as sovereign of all England, and the weak and distracted Anglo-Saxon state was preserved from utter destruction by being subjected to the sword of a foreign conqueror. Happily for the people, the sense of religion was not entirely extinguished in the land by these repeated calamities. The canons made at Eanham, and elsewhere, during the reign of Ethelred, may be regarded as proofs of a desire, on the part of its rulers, to do all that lay in their power in order to revive Christianity, and suppress heathenism.[1]

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 285.

[2] This payment gave rise to an odious tax, known by the name of Danegild. Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 156.

[3] Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 165—176.

Cnut's zeal in the same cause was still more conspicuous, though tainted with a superstition, which resulted from a conscience burdened with the memory of crimes of the deepest dye. His ecclesiastical laws are for the most part mere re-enactments of those of Edgar, and are remarkable chiefly on account of a declaration, that all must assist in the repair of churches, which is perhaps the earliest statutory authority for the imposition of church rates.[2]

This reign also witnessed an addition to the missionary conquests of Saxon England (which during the tenth century had extended over Sweden and Norway) by the conversion of Denmark. Cnut had the merit of spreading the light of the Gospel from one of his kingdoms to another by sending English clergymen to be bishops in Denmark.[3]

This prince was also a munificent founder and benefactor of churches both in England and in foreign countries. He restored the monasteries which had been injured or destroyed in his father's military incursions, or his own; and he built churches in every place where he had fought, and appointed ministers to pray for the souls of the slain. One of his most celebrated monastic foundations was that of St. Edmondsbury, in honour of Edmund, king of East Anglia, who had been slain by the Danes in 870.[1]

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[1] Johnson's Canons, vol. i. pp. 482—500.; Thorpe, vol. i. p. 315.

[2] Thorpe, vol. ii. 411.

[3] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 355. 357.; Lappenberg, vol. ii. pp. 204, 205.

The most remarkable religious act of Cnut was the pilgrimage which he undertook to Rome in the latter part of his life, for the purpose (as he tells the English bishops, in a letter which has been preserved) of obtaining the patronage of the Apostle St. Peter, and praying for the redemption of his sins. Whatever motives of superstition may have prompted the journey, he took care that it should be attended with some benefits to his subjects by procuring from the German emperor, and other princes, for merchants and pilgrims travelling from England to Rome, a promise of immunity from taxation, and protection to their persons. He also remonstrated, in the strongest terms, with the Pope on account of the large sums demanded from English archbishops when they went for their palls, and obtained a promise that such exactions should no longer be made.[2] The influence of Cnut, though a brilliant conqueror and wise ruler, passed away with his life, and in seven years more the Anglo-Danish dynasty came to an end, and from that time the Danish incursions upon England ceased also.

The subsequent reign of the Anglo-Saxon king Edward (who, a century after his death, was canonised by the name of Edward the Confessor) was chiefly remarkable for the first appearance of Normans occupying high places in England. This people were of the same Scandinavian origin as the Anglo-Danes, but were nearly as distinct from them as from the Anglo-Saxons. Their language was the Romance tongue, which differed only in dialect from that of the south of France, and their manners, habits, institutions, and civilisation were French. Moreover, they were united by a closer tie with the papal see than the more rude and independent Anglo-Saxon clergy. Edward had, before he ascended the throne, resided for a long time in Normandy, being nearly related to the family of its princes, and had acquired a strong partiality for everything that was Norman. This predilection he soon showed in the appointment of bishops, a circumstance which was sure to give umbrage to his Anglo-Saxon subjects. Besides other Norman appointments, Robert, a monk of Jumièges, was made bishop of London, and afterwards archbishop of Canterbury. This dignity, however, he did not long retain: in consequence of a change in the king's counsels, by which Godwine, earl of Kent, and his sons regained the height of power from which they had been for a short time ejected, Robert and the other Normans were banished from the country. This banishment seems to have been regarded in England as equivalent to a sentence of deposition, and Stigand, bishop of Winchester, was appointed to the primacy.[1] Stigand's title to the archbishopric was afterwards a matter of controversy. He was not acknowledged as archbishop at Rome, partly on the ground of the deposition of Robert being regarded as informal, and partly because he never obtained a pall, except from Benedict X., who himself held the papal chair by a disputed title, and was afterwards deposed.[2] Moreover, he was suspended as a schismatic by Alexander II., who became Pope in 1061. This suspension so far operated in preventing him from exercising his full metropolitan powers as to cause Wulfstan, bishop of Worcester, to be consecrated by archbishop Aldred of York, although the newly consecrated prelate made his profession of obedience to the Church of Canterbury and its archbishops canonically instituted.[1] Aldred also, for the same reason, officiated at the coronation of Harold, the successor of Edward.[2] On the other hand, it is indisputable that for nineteen years Stigand was acknowledged in England as Primate, and signed charters as archbishop of Canterbury, next in order to the queen, and before the archbishop of York.[3] Edward the Confessor was by natural disposition better qualified for the cloister than for the throne, and therefore, as might be expected, showed himself on all occasions a devoted adherent of the Papal See. At an early period of his reign he sent delegates to the papal synods at Rheims and at Rome, and would, in pursuance of a vow, have personally made a pilgrimage to Rome, had he not been prevented by the importunity of his friends and counsellors, and the pressure of public duty. Finding it impossible to fulfil his vow, he requested the Pope to release him from it, and the boon was granted, on condition of his causing a minster to be erected in honour of St. Peter and St. Paul. The result was the foundation of Westminster Abbey, on what was then called the Isle of Thorney, where stood the ruins of a church, founded by Sabert, king of Essex. For the completion of this pious work Edward regularly devoted the tenth of his revenues; but it was not till within a few days of his death that the building was ready for consecration, a ceremony at which he was prevented by illness from being present.[4] So subservient was this king to the designs of the Pope, that he applied for a papal confirmation of the privileges granted by his charter to the monastery; and the Pope, in answer to this application, not only conferred upon the abbey an exemption, by a Bull of Privileges, from episcopal jurisdiction, but took upon himself to confirm the temporal grants made by the king for the endowment, and to bestow upon him the right of patronage.[1] Besides the erection of Westminster Abbey there were some other munificent foundations of churches and abbeys during this reign, by Leofric, earl of Mercia and Coventry, and Godiva, his wife, which testify that the spirit of the age still continued to encourage as much as in times past the establishment of monastic institutions. On the other hand we read of one instance of a contrary disposition, when Leofric, bishop of Crediton, removed his see to Exeter, and ejected the monks from the abbey in that city, to make way for a body of canons regular.[2]

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[1] Malmsbury, Kings of England, lib. ii. cap. 11.; Saxon Chron. anno 870.

[2] Malmsbury, Kings of England, lib. ii. cap. 11.

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[1] Saxon Chron. A.D. 1052. See Dr. Townsend's Civil and Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 302.

[2] Saxon Chron. A.D. 1058, 1059.

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[1] Wendover, A.D. 1062, 1095. See Townsend, vol. ii. pp. 294. 303.

[2] Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 274.

[3] Saxon Chron. A.D. 1061, 1066; Kemble's Codex Diplomaticus, Nos. 806. 808. 813. 817. 819.

[4] Saxon Chron. A.D. 1046, 1047, 1065; Lappenberg, vol. ii. pp. 243—272.

The accession of Harold, the son of Godwine, who in 1066 was unanimously chosen to succeed Edward the Confessor, was speedily followed by the invasion of England by William, duke of Normandy. This prince had no shadow of lawful title to the English crown, although he obtained the blessing of Pope Alexander II. upon his enterprise. Alexander, having suspended Stigand for intruding into the archiepiscopal see of Canterbury during archbishop Robert's lifetime, was not inclined to regard Harold with any favour, whose family had contributed to Robert's expulsion. He was induced by the representations of the archdeacon of Lisieux, William's agent at the court of Rome, as also by the counsels of archdeacon Hildebrand (afterwards the celebrated Gregory VII.) to favour the invasion, with the view probably of getting rid of Stigand and obtaining the appointment of an archbishop of Canterbury more devoted to the Papacy. Hence he not only excommunicated Harold, but sent William a consecrated banner, on which were represented the cross and the figure of an armed warrior, together with a ring, intended to be a token of the papal investiture of the land which he was about to conquer. After the battle of Hastings (which was fought on the 14th of October, 1066, and which decided the fate of the Anglo-Saxon monarchy), the consecrated banner was planted by the Normans in the place where that of Harold had floated, which was sent to the Pope as a trophy; a significant emblem of the approaching triumph of papal principles over the independence of the English Church. A lofty abbey was afterwards raised upon the spot, to consecrate the memory of a battle which so completely changed the destinies of England.[1]

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[1] Collier, vol. i. pp. 526, 527.

[2] Malmsbury, Kings of England, lib. ii. cap. 13.; Lingard, vol. ii. p. 326 note.

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[1] Lappenberg, vol. ii. pp. 288. 301.

CHAP. X.

SUMMARY OF THE DOCTRINES TAUGHT BY THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH.

As we have now arrived at a great epoch in our national history which is marked by the introduction of a new race into the country, and a consequent change of language, laws, institutions, and manners, it seems proper that in this place we should give a general outline of the state of the Anglo-Saxon Church, with reference to the important subjects of doctrine, Church government, discipline, ritual, ceremonies, and religious practices enjoined or sanctioned by the Church.

1. The question of doctrine seems closely connected with that of the relation between the Anglo-Saxon Church and the see of Rome. If the view that we have taken in the preceding pages, of the state of the English Church, in the times before the Norman Conquest, be correct, that Church occupied a position with respect to the question of Papal Supremacy, which was neither that of entire independence of the Papal See on the one hand, nor yet for the most part of servile subjection to it on the other. The reception of the pall from the Roman Pontiff was considered generally necessary to enable the English archbishops to exercise the metropolitan functions of consecrating the bishops of their respective provinces, and of holding provincial synods, although, during a space of more than four centuries and a half from Augustine to Stigand, there may have been instances of archbishops by whom this ceremony was omitted.[1] In earlier times this badge was sent to the new metropolitan :

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[1] Kemble, vol. ii. p. 368. note; Cf. Townsend, vol. ii. pp. 288—297.

afterwards it became customary not only that he should go to Rome in person for it, but that he should take with him an ample donative for the Papal treasury. Against this trouble and expense the Anglo-Saxon prelates of the 9th century vainly remonstrated [1], although at a later period, as we have seen, some redress of the grievance was procured by the indignant importunities of king Cnut. We have seen, moreover, in the case of Theodore and the Council of Hatfield, as in that of Cuthbert and the Council of Cloveshoo, and still more in that of the Council of Calcuith held under the direction of the Papal legates, instances, which show not only that the Popes claimed the right to regulate questions of doctrine and discipline in the Church of England, but that such interference was acquiesced in by her prelates, and not repudiated by her sovereigns. So again the aid of the Pope's power was sought for the purpose of establishing a new metropolitan at Lichfield, and again the same power was exerted a few years later for the purpose of undoing that arrangement. So also, we find the Popes, at an earlier period, giving charters of exemption to abbeys, whereby the abbots were freed from episcopal visitation [2], and made subject only to the Papal See. On the other hand it is unquestionable that through the greater part of the Anglo-Saxon period the sovereign possessed and generally exercised, sometimes alone, sometimes with the consent of the witan, that important function of ecclesiastical supremacy, which consists in the appointment of the bishops. Sometimes the form of a popular election was preserved, and an instrument certifying that election, was presented to the metropolitan; sometimes a royal mandate seems to have issued, directing the metropolitan to perform the office of consecration.[3] Before that ceremony was performed, it was the duty of the archbishop to put certain questions to the bishop elect, and to require from him a declaration of faith and profession of obedience. It is remarkable, however, that this declaration of faith did not, in earlier times, involve any acknowledgment of the papal decrees. It was not, as it seems, till the middle of the 9th century, that such an innovation was introduced.[1] The profession of obedience, moreover, was a declaration of allegiance to the metropolitan, and not to the Papal See. In fact it was not till long after the Anglo-Saxon period that the bishops were required to take an oath of fidelity to the Pope. Hence, England during that period, retained to a certain extent the national independence of her Church. Her bishops were not distracted by the claims of a double allegiance. Her beneficed clergy were not compelled to swear obedience to the Roman Pontiff, as the successor of St. Peter, and the vicar of Jesus Christ.[2] Her kings claimed for themselves the last-mentioned title, as well as that of vicar of the supreme king[3], and, as heads of the Church within their dominions, not only called and presided over national councils, but exercised that prerogative which is ascribed to the sovereigns of England by the articles of our reformed Church, viz., "that they should rule all states and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be ecclesiastical or temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil doers."[4] Moreover, in the case of Wilfrid, her synods made light of appeals to the Papal See; and in the next century her divines concurred with those of France and Germany in rejecting the decrees of the second Nicene Council, though supported by the authority of the

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[1] Lingard, vol. i. p. 121.

[2] Saxon Chron. anno 675; Wendover, anno 793.

[3] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 24.; Kemble, vol. ii. p. 382.

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[1] Compare the description of the questions to be put to a bishop elect, as given by Eadulf, A. D. 800, with the profession made by Berhtred, A. D. 850. Lingard, vol. ii. p. 25. note. See also Soames's Bampton Lectures, p. 95.

[2] Bull of Pius IV. Super formâ Juramenti.

[3] Soames's Bampton Lectures, pp. 150. 177. 182.

[4] Art. 37.

Pope. Lastly, from the time of the union of the Saxon kingdoms under one sovereign to the latter end of Edward the Confessor's reign, a period of nearly two centuries and a half, no papal legate once visited the British shores.

When we consider these things, we may easily be led into the error of supposing that, because a national church was so long preserved here in a state of comparative independence, therefore that Church must have been free from those corruptions of doctrine, which are inseparably associated in our minds with the idea of subjection to the see of Rome. Nothing, however, could be more erroneous than such a supposition. What we call Romish errors may exist without any acknowledgment of Rome as the mother and mistress of all churches, for such errors (as has been ably shown by a leading divine of our times) are in a great measure the natural growth of the corrupt human heart.[1] It may, indeed, be satisfactory to find that a principal Romish article of belief, as transubstantiation, for example, was not entertained by the Anglo-Saxon Church, and that the doctrines of the Reformed Church of England regarding the Eucharist "are in perfect unison with those traditions which were taught by all the earliest luminaries of our distant ancestry."[2] But we can hardly venture (without more limitations and qualifications) to express the same feeling of satisfaction with respect to "other leading and distinctive principles of belief." The leading principle of mediæval religion seems to be one, which it was a chief object of the Reformers of the 16th century to explode, viz., that man can by his own works merit, as a matter of desert, eternal salvation from God. This principle was in vogue long before the commencement of what are called the middle ages; it is the very life and soul of monachism; it was the foundation of all the so much lauded good works of the reputed saints of the Middle Ages, whether those works consisted in acts of real devotion to God and love to man, or in fancied aims at perfection by extraordinary bodily mortifications, penance, fasting, pilgrimages, celibacy, and the like. This principle also, as we shall have occasion to show, was the foundation of the whole of the system of Anglo-Saxon penitential discipline with all its concomitant abuses. What we mean is perhaps more clearly to be illustrated by such examples as the following, the like of which are to be found in every page of Anglo-Saxon history. Ethelbald, king of the Mercians, in granting a charter of exemption of all churches and monasteries in his kingdom from public taxes except the inevitable three, declares his motive to be, that "out of love to heaven and regard for his own soul, he has felt the necessity of considering how he may, by good works, set it free from every tie of sin."[1] The canons of Cloveshoo enjoin that alms should be given, "as an increase of a man's own satisfaction, that the divine wrath which he hath provoked by his own demerits may the sooner be pacified."[2]

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[1] Archbishop Whateley's Errors of Romanism.

[2] Soames's Bampton Lectures, p. 473.

2. Nevertheless, whatever errors of doctrine may have prevailed in the Anglo-Saxon Church, they are to be traced rather to the general ignorance of the times concerning which we write, than to any deliberate intention on the part of ecclesiastical rulers to keep the people in darkness. The best among them were servants, who knew but imperfectly their Lord's will, and if they "did commit things worthy of stripes," we must remember that they are to be judged by Him, who requires much only of those to whom He has entrusted much.[3] We must confess, that some of them were "blind leaders of the blind"; and yet we cannot justly impute to them that Pharisaic obstinacy, which could "take away the key of knowledge," and hinder others from entering into that light which they

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[1] Malmsbury, Kings of England, lib. i. cap. 4.

[2] Johnson's Canons, vol. i. p. 256.

[3] Luke, xii. 48.

would not approach themselves.[1] The most eminent Anglo-Saxon teachers encouraged a free access for their pupils to the holy fountains of truth. Aldhelm, while he exhorted men to read the Holy Scriptures, recommended the acquisition of secular learning, as a means of enabling them to dive into the signification of the sacred text.[2] Bede and Alcuin were celebrated as commentators on the Scriptures. The last dying work of the former was, as we have seen above, a translation of St. John's gospel; the latter spent some years in revising the manuscripts of all the books of the Old and New Testaments. The language employed by Alcuin, in commending the frequent study of the Holy Scriptures, was such as in fervour and earnestness could hardly be exceeded by the most zealous Protestant. He says, "The reading of Holy Scriptures is the knowledge of everlasting blessedness. In the Holy Scriptures man may contemplate himself, as in some mirror, what sort of person he is. Just so the reading of Holy Scriptures; it cleanseth the reader's soul, it bringeth into his mind the fear of hell punishment, and it raiseth his heart to the joy above. The man who wishes ever to be with God, he should often pray to Him, and he should often read the Holy Scriptures. For when we pray we speak to God, and when we read the holy books, then God speaks to us."[3]

The book of Scripture, which appears to have been most familiar to pious Anglo-Saxons, was the Psalter, which served the purpose of a collection of prayers and meditations for private devotion. Bede seems to have regarded the book in this light, when he strung together separate verses of the Psalms, which were calculated to impress certain truths upon the mind, or excite pious affections. Alcuin improved upon this, by collecting together Psalms of the same meaning and tendency in several fasciculi, or bundles, and prefixing to each fasciculus a title explanatory of its object. Those who wished to pray for others, used to chant portions of the Psalter, at the conclusion of which they were taught to offer short prayers, expressed in given forms in Latin, if the petitioner understood that language, or, if not, in Saxon.[1] This practice of psalmody must certainly have been a great comfort to those who could comprehend with the spirit the divine songs of "the sweet Psalmist of Israel," and especially to those whose sight was impaired by old age or other infirmity.

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[1] Luke, xi. 52.

[2] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 187, 188.

[3] Soames's Bampton Lectures, p. 92.

It is true that the 8th century, during which the eminent men, of whom we have just spoken, flourished, was a time of far greater light and knowledge than any other portion of the Anglo-Saxon period of our history. An age of the grossest darkness and barbarism ensued; but even this was distinguished by the birth of Alfred, himself a constant student of Holy Scripture, the author of a code of laws professedly based on the Divine law, and the translator of part of the Psalms of David into the vernacular tongue. Moreover, almost every collection of canons from the time of Archbishop Egbert to the Norman Conquest, contains a special injunction for the teaching of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer to the people; and ignorance upon these cardinal points was held to disqualify a person for the reception of the Holy Communion, as well as for the office of sponsor in baptism, and even to render him unworthy to lie in consecrated ground after death.[4]

The Canons of Ælfric, which belong to the 10th century, contain also a direction that the priest should explain the gospel of the day to the people in English, as well as the Lord's Prayer and Creed, with an injunction to preach to the laymen, lest, for want of teaching, they should perish.[1] It is easy to understand that such an injunction became more especially necessary towards the close of the Anglo-Saxon period, when the laity, with some few exceptions in the higher classes, were generally unable to read.[2]

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[1] Lingard, vol. i. p. 306.; Johnson, vol. i. p. 258.

[2] Egbert's Excerpt. cap. vi.; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 98.; Canons of Cloveshoo, cap. 10.; Johnson, vol. i. p. 247.; Canons of Edgar, cap. 17. 22.; Thorpe, vol. ii. p 249.; Cnut's Ecclesiastical Laws, cap. 22.; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 373.

Ælfric the homilist's labours, for the diffusion of the knowledge of the Scriptures among his countrymen, deserve especial notice; more particularly, as he wrote at a time of general darkness. Notwithstanding some mistakes on his part, the Church of that day was deeply indebted to the writer, who taught such principles, with respect to the authority of Holy Scripture, as the following: — "All teachers, that take not their doctrine and examples out of these holy books, are like those of whom Christ Himself thus said: — 'If the blind man be leader of the blind, then shall they both fall into some blind pit;' but such teachers as take their example and doctrine from hence, whether it be out of the Old Testament or the New, are such as Christ Himself spake of in these words: —'Every learned scribe in the Church of God is like the master of a family, who brings forth ever out of his own treasure things new and old.'"[3]

Such a learned scribe was Ælfric himself, although his personal history is so far a matter of controversy, that it cannot be positively ascertained, which of the individuals who bore the name at the latter end of the 10th, or beginning of the 11th century (two of whom attained to the archiepiscopal dignity), was the author of the writings which have been preserved as the translations, homilies, and epistles of Ælfric. It was a good deed, on his part, in such a period of ignorance, to publish translations of portions of the

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[1] Canons of Ælfric, cap. 23.; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 351.

[2] Lingard, vol. i. p. 315.

[3] Soames's Bampton Lectures, pp. 94, 95.

Old Testament into the vernacular tongue. These selections included abridgments of the Pentateuch, the Book of Joshua, and part of Judges; and to them were added portions of the books of Kings, and the apocryphal books of Judith and Maccabees, as peculiarly suited to a time, when the people were called upon to make a valiant resistance to their country's foes. It was also an admirable device of Ælfric, to publish some collections of homilies, for the use of the ill-instructed priests of his time, which were translations, more or less free, from the most celebrated ancient and modern Fathers of the Christian Church. These homilies, when finished, were sent to Sigeric the Primate for his correction, and were published with the sanction of his authority.[1]

3. The chief point which has given the writings of Ælfric importance in the eyes of Protestant writers, is the testimony which they bear against the Romish dogma of transubstantiation.

Founding his own teaching on the same sure foundation, which he exhorted others to adopt, Ælfric, in his homily on Easter Day, where he explains why the holy housel (that is, the Lord's Supper) is called Christ's body and blood, if it be not truly that which it is called, declares: — "Truly, the bread and wine, that are hallowed through the priest's mass, present one thing to men's senses outwardly, and call up another thing to the minds of believers inwardly. Outwardly they seem bread and wine in appearance and taste; yet after the hallowing they are in sooth, through ghostly mystery, Christ's body and His blood. . . . In kind, the holy housel is corruptible bread and corruptible wine; and, according to the power of the divine word, it is in sooth Christ's body and His blood; not however in bodily guise, but after a ghostly manner. Truly the body in which Christ suffered was born of the flesh of Mary, with blood and bone, with skin and sinews, with many limbs and a reasonable soul, giving life to it; and His ghostly body, which we call the housel, is gathered of many corns, without blood and bone, limbless, and soulless; and therefore we are to understand nothing therein after a bodily, but everything is to be understood after a ghostly manner."[1] The writer speaks to the same effect in the epistle which goes by the name of the Canons of Ælfric, where, in condemning the practice, which some priests adopted, of keeping the housel or bread consecrated for the Eucharist on Easter Day to give to the sick on other days (by which process it became corrupted), he uses these words: — "The housel is Christ's body, not bodily but spiritually; not the body in which He suffered, but the body about which He spake, when He blessed bread and wine for housel, one day before His passion, and said of the blessed bread — 'This is my body;' and afterwards, of the hallowed wine — 'This is my blood, which shall be shed for many, in forgiveness of sins.' Understand now, that the Lord who could, before His passion, change the bread to His body, and the wine to His blood spiritually, that the same daily blesses, by the hands of His priests, the bread and wine to His spiritual body and blood."[2] It is difficult to conceive what language could be employed, that would be more decisive in its testimony against the doctrine of a carnal corporal presence in the Eucharist. These expressions, it must be remembered, are used in authoritative documents; the passage last quoted being addressed to the clergy of a diocese, in the name of their bishop; whereas the former occurs in a set of homilies formally submitted to the Primate for his approbation, with a request that anything heretical in them might be corrected. As far, then, as the formal teaching of the archbishops and bishops at any time may be said to represent the teaching of a particular Church, without any synodical declaration on the subject, so far may the teaching of Ælfric be said to prove, that the modern Romish doctrine of transubstantiation (according to which the bread in the Eucharist, after consecration, ceases to be bread) was not held by the English Church before the Norman conquest. It may be true, as Romish writers contend, that the language of Bede[1] and Alcuin is very different from that of Ælfric, and more like that which controversialists would use to express the dogma of transubstantiation; it may be true, that these writers have expressed themselves in a bold figurative style, such as Anglican divines, since the Reformation, could not correctly use. On the other hand, it must be recollected that they wrote before the subject of the corporal presence in the Eucharist became a matter of controversy; and therefore it would be unreasonable to expect strictly correct definitions of doctrine from them in treating of this subject.[2] The case is otherwise with Ælfric, who is supposed by Romish writers to have borrowed his doctrine from Ratramn (a writer of the 9th century), and who certainly wrote long after Paschasius Radbert had (A.D. 830) asserted the doctrine of the corporal presence.

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 312—319.

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 457, 458.; Soames's Bampton Lectures, p. 423.
[2] Ælfric, cap. 37.; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 361.

The matter will appear more clear, if we compare the language of our Anglo-Saxon divines with certain confessions of faith of the 11th century, which were really intended to express the doctrine of transubstantiation. Berengarius, the great opponent of the doctrine of Paschasius, was summoned before a council at Rome in 1078, and there required to profess his belief "that the bread of the altar, after consecration, is the real body of Christ, which was born of the Virgin, suffered on the cross, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; and that the wine of the altar, after consecration, is the real blood which flowed from Christ's side." And this being not deemed sufficient, he was required, in the following year, to subscribe to the doctrine, "that the bread and wine, by the mysterious rite of the holy prayer and the words of our Redeemer, are changed in their substance into the real and proper and vivifying flesh and blood of Jesus Christ;" and further, that "the bread and wine are, after consecration, the real body and blood of Christ, not only by a sign and in virtue of a sacrament, but in their essential properties, and in the reality of their substance."[1] Surely there is nothing in the remains of Anglo-Saxon divinity which can fairly be said to amount to anything like this.

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[1] It should be observed on the other hand, that the passages cited by Mr. Soames from Bede, seem altogether opposed to the notion of transubstantiation. Bampton Lectures, p. 399.

[2] See Bishop Short's remarks on this point. History of the Church of England, p. 18.

4. While, however, we strongly contend that the Anglo-Saxon Church is altogether free from the imputation of maintaining the dogma of transubstantiation, it must be admitted that her divines did teach some superstitions with respect to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and other kindred subjects. Thus we have numerous instances not only of prayers being offered for the dead, but of the celebration of the Holy Communion, or the service of the mass (as it was called) for the supposed benefit of dead persons. The doctrine with respect to this matter is thus expressed in a Saxon homily ascribed to the reign of Ethelred. "Some men's souls go to rest after their departure, and those of some go to punishment, according to that which they wrought before, and are afterwards released through alms-deeds, and especially through the mass, if men do these things for them." And again, "the holy souls which dwell in heaven, pray for us who dwell on earth, and also for the souls which

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[1] Mosehim, lib. iii. cent. xi.

are in punishments; and they have a recollection of their faithful friends; and we may also intercede for those who are in punishments, and especially through the mass, even as books tell us."[1] Even as early as the 8th century, we find Bede begging the monks of Lindisfarne to pray and celebrate masses after his death, for the redemption of his soul, and making mention of his having procured his name to be entered on their roll, as an honorary member of their body, for the express purpose of obtaining this benefit.[2] Those who founded or endowed churches or monasteries, frequently did so, on the express condition of their having these services performed for them after death; and even in the absence of such a condition, it was the custom to record in a book belonging to each church the days of the death of its founders or benefactors, that their anniversaries might be kept with appropriate services, of which the mass formed part. There were also numerous gilds or associations in Saxon England, the members of which were bound, by a common obligation, to attend the funerals of their deceased brethren, and pray and distribute alms for the supposed benefit of their souls.

It may be said that a simple prayer for the dead does not necessarily imply any false doctrine, though the dead person can hardly be considered capable of receiving any benefit from the prayers of the living. I would give as an instance, such a prayer as that inserted among the canons of Cloveshoo[4], "Lord, according to the greatness of thy mercy, grant rest to his soul, and for thine infinite pity, vouchsafe to him the joys of eternal light with thy saints." But when prayer, or any kind of service for the dead is celebrated with the intention expressed in the above-cited passages of the homily, for the purpose of delivering the dead from punishment, it is obvious that such a notion is utterly opposed to the doctrine of Holy Scripture. When Abraham tells Dives, in our Lord's parable, of "the great gulph fixed" betwixt the righteous and the wicked, he does not give a hint that a way over that gulph may be found through the prayers, alms, or sacraments of the faithful still living upon earth, but rather asserts the utter hopelessness of such an attempt, by adding, "neither can they pass to us that would come from thence."[1] And the intention of such services being obviously superstitious, and the adoption of them not sanctioned by Holy Scripture, we cannot doubt the wisdom of our Reformers in omitting all prayers for the dead from the revised Liturgy ; more especially, as in their time prayers for the departed involved a belief in the modern Romish doctrine of purgatory, as defined by the Synods of Florence and Trent. It does not, however, appear that the doctrine of those Synods, that there is a purgatory, a place in which the souls of those who are truly penitent are detained for the purpose of penal cleansing, and from which they may be delivered by the prayers, masses, and alms of the faithful, was formally enunciated in England during the Anglo-Saxon period, though individual teachers of authority appear to have held the notion as a matter of speculative belief.[2] We must not dismiss this part of the subject without observing that the ordinary services for the dead consisted of frequent repetitions of the Lord's Prayer, of chanting a number of psalms, and of the celebration of the mass, which was repeated as often as was required by the friends of the departed. The alms-deeds, which were supposed to benefit the deceased, consisted generally of distributions (sometimes to be repeated annually) of money, clothing, or provisions among the poor. Another practice, by no means uncommon, and which was an instance of the conversion of a superstitious usage to Christian ends, was the manumission of the slaves of a dead person (whether directed by his own will or otherwise) for the benefit of his soul. In this respect, the Church, even though it sanctioned the superstition, set an example worthy of imitation, by enacting at the second Council of Calcuith, A.D. 816, that, when a bishop died, not only a tenth part of his substance should be given in alms to the poor, for his soul's sake, but that every English slave belonging to him should be set free, and that each bishop and abbot who survived him should set at liberty three slaves and give them each three shillings. That this enactment was not a dead letter is shown by the will of archbishop Ælfric, made 200 years later, in which the injunction of the canon was strictly obeyed.[1]

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[1] Soames's Bampton Lectures, pp. 360, 361. See also Bede, E. H. lib. iv. cap. 22.

[2] Bede's Preface to the Life of St. Cuthbert, cited by Lingard, vol. ii. p. 64. note.

[3] Bede, vol. iv. cap. 14.; Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 62—70.

[4] Johnson's Canons, vol. i. p. 258.

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[1] Luke, xvi. 26.

[2] Soames's Bampton Lectures, p. 328., and the authorities referred to in the notes.

5. If the Anglo-Saxon Church cannot be considered as free from the error of teaching that the intercessions of the living were available for the spiritual benefit of the dead, neither can it be regarded as blameless with respect to the still more dangerous error of seeking for the intercessions of the dead on behalf of the living. The theology of the ancient Fathers of the Christian Church, while it taught that God alone in the three persons of the Holy Trinity was to be worshipped, and that to Him alone prayers were to be offered, may be considered by implication to have condemned the practice of what has since been called the invocation of saints.[2]

The necessity or benefit of having other mediators, whose patronage might be employed in order to obtain the intercession of the one great Mediator, was probably a notion derived originally from the excessive veneration paid to the early

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[1] Johnson's Canons, vol. i. p. 306.; Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 69, 70.

[2] See the authorities from Tertullian, Origen, and others, cited by Bingham, lib. xiii. cap iii. sects. 1 and 2. Also Augustine, de Civ. Dei, quoted by Soames, Bampton Lectures, p. 215.

Christian martyrs. Moreover, as the nations of the world passed from heathenism to Christianity, their conversion was generally attended with the incorporation in their new faith of some relics of paganism, such as hero-worship and other superstitions. There can be no doubt that this process took place among our Anglo-Saxon ancestors; and accordingly we find the practice of the invocation of saints existing among them in early times. It was, however, adopted with this distinction, that prayer ought to be directed to God alone, the aid of holy men being sought that they might intercede for us to their Lord and our Lord.[1] So Archbishop Theodore remarks in his Penitential on the difference of language in the Litany, when the petition is addressed to our Blessed Lord, and when it is addressed to the Saints. "We say, 'Christ hear us,' and then, 'Saint Mary, pray for us:' we do not say, 'Christ, pray for us,' and 'Saint Mary, or Saint Peter, hear us;' but 'Christ, hear us,' and 'Son of God, we beseech thee, hear us.'"[2] Bede and Alcuin, as well as the homilist Ælfric, may be cited, as giving the sanction of their names to petitions, soliciting the patronage or intercession of the Blessed Virgin, and other saints. Even Christian laymen were taught to pray at least twice a day, and to the devotions addressed to their Creator alone, they were directed to add invocations to St. Mary and other saints for their intercession with God.[3]

It is probably true, as the modern Romish historian observes, in apologising for this unscriptural practice, that the divines who sanctioned it, were "too well instructed to confound man with God. They knew how to discriminate between the adoration due to the Supreme Being, and the honours which might be claimed by the most holy among His servants; and while they worshipped Him as the Author of every blessing, they paid no other respect to them, than what was owing to men, whom they considered as *His* favourites and *their* advocates."[1] But, notwithstanding this it admits of no reasonable doubt, that the practice of the invocation of saints, though it may be thus explained and modified by the subtleties of refined minds, must almost of necessity be differently understood by plain and unlearned men. Such persons will easily overlook from ignorance, or leap over from excess of zeal for the honour of some favourite saint, the fine distinction between invocation for the purpose of obtaining intercession, and direct prayer. So it is that a practice, which has no scriptural foundation, has led and must lead to acts, which even Romish divines themselves confess to be idolatrous, and so even if the Church of Rome be acquitted of the charge of directly teaching creature worship, at least, it cannot be denied, that by enjoining the invocation of saints, she lays a dangerous snare for her children, by enticing them to "worship and serve the creature more than the Creator."[2]

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[1] Homily quoted by Soames, Bampton Lectures, pp. 215, 216.

[2] Theodore's Penit.; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 57.

[3] Ecclesiastical Institutes; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 421.; Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 85, 86.

6. That the invocation of saints had not in Anglo-Saxon times led to such a deplorable end, may be a subject for congratulation. That it had, however, contributed to the increase of superstition rather than true piety, may be inferred from the extraordinary veneration paid to the remains or the supposed remains (for there was great room for fraud in such a matter) of those who were reckoned among the saints. We have mentioned above, how Gregory sent Augustine a supply of relics for the purpose of his mission; and it appears that until it was otherwise provided by the Council of Calcuith, A.D. 816, the deposit of relics was a necessary part of the ceremonial of the consecration of a church. As Christianity spread

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 94.

[2] Rom. i. 25. See Palmer's Origines Liturgicæ, vol. i. pp. 290, 291.

more and more, the number of those on whom the name of saints was bestowed, constantly increased. Not only Gregory and Augustine, but many others, who, like Chad, and Cuthbert, and Wilfrid, had laboured successfully as missionaries, or who, like Theodore, had faithfully presided over their churches, were considered as worthy of the honour of having their patronage invoked. The venerable band was continually augmented as ages rolled on, and the power of canonization (as it was called), *i. e.* of adding to the number of saints, was exercised by provincial bishops and national councils. It was not till after the Anglo-Saxon period that this office was considered as part of the prerogatives of the Papal See. During the more prosperous portion of that period, when churches and monasteries rose everywhere around the land, there was scarcely a monastery that did not possess one of these worthies: their relics were raised from the dust, in which they had been originally deposited, to be enshrined in the interior of the church. At these shrines the dead were solemnly invoked by multitudes, and miraculous cures were reported as being performed through their intercession. Without depreciating the virtues which some of these persons possessed, or the benefits which they conferred upon their rude and illiterate countrymen, we feel bound to reject the miracles alleged to have been wrought through their means, for these two simple and unanswerable reasons; 1st. that no sufficient cause can be given in the case of any of the alleged miracles for the suspension of the ordinary laws of nature; 2ndly, that they rest only on the evidence of uncertain tradition, or the reports of the ignorant, the credulous, and the superstitious. On either ground they must be rejected by the philosophical inquirer into history, as altogether unworthy of credit.[1]

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 89. note; 56. 97.

CHAP. XI.

STATE OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH WITH RESPECT TO CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND DISCIPLINE.

Closely connected with the subject of the purity of the doctrines of a church, are the laws which regulate its polity or form of government, and the internal discipline of its members. Under the head of Church Government we shall have less ground than under that of Doctrine, for finding fault with our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, as having departed from the models of primitive Christianity.

1. In the Anglo-Saxon Church, as in the ancient British, and other branches of the Catholic Church, bishops were regarded as the sole possessors of the power of ordaining elders and deacons, and as the only lawful possessors of spiritual authority over those ministers and their churches, though their authority was to a certain extent limited by the canons of the Church, and made subject to appeal to diocesan and provincial synods. In the appointment of bishops in Saxon England, as we have seen before, the primitive mode of popular election was abandoned for the method, that seemed more suited to the necessity of a country newly converted from heathenism, by the direct nomination of the sovereign. In all other respects, however, the notion of a bishop in the earlier part of the Anglo-Saxon period seems to have been truly primitive and apostolical. The account given above from Bede of the manner of life of Bishop Aidan will enable us to form some idea of the life of the missionary bishop of the 7th century, an idea which we are enabled to realise more truly, by what we hear of missionary bishops in

our colonies at present. Moreover, we find in an old Anglo-Saxon treatise[1], on the obligations attached to different ranks and professions, this general description of the pastoral duties of the episcopal office : — " Bishops shall follow their books and prayers, and daily and nightly, oft and frequently, call to Christ, and earnestly intercede for all Christian people ; and they shall learn and rightly teach, and diligently inquire regarding the people's deeds ; and they shall preach and earnestly give example, for the spiritual need of a Christian nation ; and they shall not willingly consent to any unrighteousness, but earnestly support all righteousness ; they shall have the fear of God in mind, and not be too slothful, for fear of the world ; but let them ever earnestly preach God's righteousness, and forbid unrighteousness ; observe it who will ; because weak will the shepherd be found for the flock, who will not defend, at least with his cry, the flock which he has to tend, unless he otherwise may, if any public robber there begin to rob."

But the bishop was not only a chief pastor, he was by the Anglo-Saxon constitution a judge in the temporal courts ; and therefore this same treatise enlarges upon the duty of his so conducting himself in his judicial capacity as not to consent to or permit the least injustice.[2] The writer then goes on to give some details of the bishop's daily work : —" His prayers first ; and then his book-work, reading or writing, teaching or learning, and his church hours at the right time, always according to the things thereto befitting ; and washing the feet of the poor ; and his alms-dealing ; and the direction of works, where it may be needful. Good handicrafts are also befitting him, that crafts may be cultivated in his family, at least, that no one too idle may dwell there. Likewise wisdom and prudence are ever befitting bishops, and they have estimable ways who follow them; and that they also know some separate craft. Nothing useless ever befits bishops, neither extravagance, nor folly, nor too much drinking, nor childishness in speech, nor vain scurrility in any wise, neither at home nor on a journey, nor in any place; but wisdom and prudence befit their order, and sobriety befits those who follow them.[1]

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[1] Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical. Thorpe, vol. ii. pp. 311—315.

[2] Ibid. p. 313.

It may seem strange to us that a knowledge of handicraft should be considered requisite in a bishop. The same thing was also enjoined to the parochial clergy, and for this reason, "because idleness is the soul's foe, and because the devil quickly brings into some vices him whom he finds devoid of any good work."[2] Even a ruler of the Church might find it necessary to resort to such an expedient, not only as an antidote to idleness but as a wholesome method of relaxation, both of mind and body, from the harassing duties of his office, and one for which he might plead the apostolical authority of St. Paul. Hence it happened that many eminent bishops and abbots distinguished themselves by their proficiency in the costly arts of painting, of correcting or illuminating manuscripts, binding books, embroidery, and working in gold and silver.

Teaching also was an occupation considered worthy of the highest rank in the Church, as was shown more remarkably in the cases of archbishop Theodore, Egbert of York, and his successor, Albert, and Ethelwold of Winchester, of whom we are told that it was his delight to teach youths, to explain to them Latin books in English, to instruct them in the rules of grammar and metre, and by cheerful conversation to draw them on to better things.

With respect to the duty of alms-dealing, of which mention has been made above, a daily distribution was expected of bishops, which was often accompanied by a washing of the feet of the poor, by way of a literal compliance with the command of our Blessed Lord to his apostles.[1]

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[1] Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 315.

[2] Ecclesiastical Institutes. Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 405.

2. We have observed before that it is probable that the parochial system of England derived its origin in a great measure from the cathedrals, the clergy of which, as the faith was gradually established, and more churches were built in the country districts, were sent thither by the bishops to form new centres of instruction. This process, we have seen, was probably going on in the days of archbishop Theodore, and there can be no doubt, from the 9th canon of the Council of Cloveshoo, that in the year 742, when that council was held, "priests had places and districts assigned to them by the bishops of the province in which they were to discharge the duty of the apostolical commission, in baptizing, teaching, and visiting."[2] The churches built in such districts were called by the name of the "priest's minster, or monastery," as distinguished from the cathedral or mother church, which was called the "chief minster;" they held a rank inferior to the latter, in a worldly point of view, and a breach of their privileges was estimated at a lower rate of compensation.[3] The clergy, who continued to reside in the monastery attached to the cathedral, according to rule, were known by the name of canons; those who had district churches assigned to them were called "mass-priests." The mass-priest could not be removed from his own shriftshire or parish, except by his bishop, and he was strictly forbidden by the canons to interfere with another's church or parish, or to seek by any means to obtain a more lucrative benefice.[4] His office was not only to instruct his flock in the duties and doctrines of Christianity, to preach to the people on the Lord's days and festivals, and to do his utmost to root out

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[1] Lingard, vol. i. pp. 98, 99. On the Thursday before Easter, this washing of the feet formed part of the public service of the day.

[2] Johnson's Canons, vol. i. p. 247.

[3] Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 343. 361.; Lingard, vol. i. p. 160.

[4] Thorpe, vol. ii. pp. 100. 247. 353.

the remains of heathenism from among them, but also to perform the daily service of the Church at the canonical hours, to keep his church, and the furniture belonging to it, in repair and in a seemly state, and to see that it was furnished with every thing that was required for public worship, and that it was not profaned for any secular or improper uses. He was directed to administer baptism as soon as it was desired, and, in case of sickness, to all that needed it, at any times and without fee; and to take care that neither that rite, nor the ceremony of confirmation, should be deferred too long. He was to bless the solemnity of marriage, to receive the confessions of penitents who came to him, and to enjoin to them fit penance. He was also required to anoint the sick with consecrated oil, a practice for which the authority of the Epistle of St. James was alleged, and which was probably originally adopted with the hope of procuring a miraculous recovery to the person afflicted.[1] Moreover, he was to administer the Holy Communion, under the name of the *viaticum*, to all sick persons, before their departure; and for this purpose in general a portion of the bread consecrated in church was especially reserved. Nor did the duty of the mass-priest to a parishioner cease with life, but he was required in some instances to attend the dead body before the funeral, and to watch with prayer and chanting by the couch where it lay; in all cases he had to perform the funeral service, and to celebrate the service of the mass for the dead after the interment.[2] In addition to all these more peculiarly clerical duties, the mass-priests were expected to instruct their clerks (*i.e.* their brethren in orders who held the subordinate offices of the Church), and even the children of their parishioners generally, in the Latin language and in ecclesiastical learning; they were directed to have always at their houses a school of disciples, and if any good man desired to commit his little ones to them for instruction, they were very gladly to receive and kindly teach them, remembering that it was written, "Those who are learned shall shine as the splendours of heaven; and those who many men incite to and instruct in learning shall shine as the stars to eternity."[1] For such teaching, however, they were forbidden to ask any pecuniary reward. With respect to the poor and needy, the mass-priest was to regard himself as more especially their friend; and not only to care for those who belonged to his own parish, but also for the wayfarers from other parts, for whose especial accommodation a building was erected near the parish church, in which, according to the apostolical precept, he was to perform the duties of hospitality, and be careful to entertain strangers.[2]

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[1] See James, v. 14.; Palmer's Origines Liturgicæ, vol. ii. p. 220.

[2] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 49—51.

Such being the duties expected of the parish priest by our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, we cannot wonder that their laws should prohibit him from indulging in any practices, or following any pursuits, either of pleasure or of business, that were inconsistent with his sacred calling, and, in particular, from engaging in trade, wearing weapons, drinking to excess, or sanctioning the practices of heathen superstition. His dress was to be plain and unadorned, but distinct from that of a layman or of a monk. His rank in society was considered as equal to that of a secular thane or noble[3], with whom he was to plead for justice, and to discharge the duty of an advocate for the poor and oppressed, and especially for that most helpless of all beings, the slave. The measurement of the bondman's labour was subject to his direction, and every weight and measure within his shriftshire was to be regulated by him, that no Christian man might injure another, nor the powerful the weak, nor even the lord his thralls. "For the thrall and the free were equally dear to God, who bought us all with equal value, and who would so judge men as they judged those who were subject to their judgment."[1]

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[1] Ecclesiastical Institutes; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 415.

[2] Titus, i. 5.; Heb. xiii. 2. See for the duties of the mass-priest, Thorpe, vol. ii. passim, pp. 98—361.; Lingard, vol. i. pp. 166—171.

[3] Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 183. 187. 307.

3. One part of the mass-priest's duty was to attend the diocesan synods, which his bishop held twice in the year, according to the canons. He was ordered to take with him to the synod one or two of his clerks, and also his ministerial vestments, and the articles necessary for the celebration of the Holy Communion, as well as ink and vellum for the purpose of committing to writing the instructions delivered by his diocesan. These synods formed an important feature in the Anglo-Saxon church polity. They were attended, not only by the clergy of the diocese, but by a select number of laymen, and lasted for three days. The meeting was opened by prayer, after which the bishop delivered a charge, in which he promulgated the decrees of the last national council, and explained the regulations which he wished to enforce in his own diocese. After this the clergy were permitted to deliver their sentiments individually, without restraint; they were expected to give an account of the state of their several parishes, and to explain the difficulties with which they had to contend in the government of them; and especially to claim the aid of the bishop against powerful offenders who defied the discipline and censures of the Church. The diocesan synods were also in part courts of judicature, before which the clergy, who had complaints against any of their brethren in the ministry, might sue for and obtain justice.[2] From these inquiries the laity were excluded, but in another stage of the proceedings they were invited to come forward and say if they had any charge to

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[1] Institutes of Polity; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 315.

[2] Canons of Edgar, cap. 3, 4, 5, 6.; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 245.

bring against any clergyman who had neglected the duties of his profession, or violated the rights of his fellow citizens. When all these matters had been heard and determined, the bishop dissolved the assembly with his blessing.[1] It is evident that a part of this synodical constitution is still preserved in those episcopal and archidiaconal visitations which have in modern times superseded the old diocesan councils. We recognise in the proceedings of these ancient synods not only the modern charge of the bishop and archdeacon, but also the presentments made by the churchwardens, as to any misconduct of the minister, and the returns made by the clergy in answer to queries addressed to them by the diocesan or his deputy, with respect to the state of their parishes. Many persons, in our own times, are of opinion that it would be desirable to revive this institution of diocesan synods according to its ancient form. Whether it would be expedient to do so or not, is a question for our ecclesiastical rulers to decide, the discussion of which is alien from the subject of these pages. It is sufficient to observe, that there seems to be nothing in the proceedings of these assemblies, which, if they were revived, could be considered as encroaching on the rights of the sovereign power of the State, or as calculated to give umbrage to the lay-members of the Church.

4. While the diocesan synods made regulations for the internal administration of dioceses in subordination to the law of the land as well as that of the Church, to national synods belonged the more important function of making canons or laws, which were binding on all members of the national Church. Each metropolitan possessed, according to the laws of the Church universal, the right of convening the bishops of his province in a provincial synod, at which were present, also, the abbots and principal ecclesiastics of

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[1] Lingard, vol. i. pp. 108, 109.

the several dioceses. Such synods might watch over the purity of the faith and the strictness of discipline, and make regulations with respect to ecclesiastical matters in general. Theodore's synods of Hertford and Hatfield were of such a nature, the laity not being present, though, as Theodore's province extended over all England, they are rather to be considered as national than provincial synods. The canons of a purely ecclesiastical synod, however, could only be enforced by spiritual censures; and from this and other causes it was found necessary to call in the aid of the civil power. Hence the national synods were generally held at the same time and place with the meetings of the witan. It has been conjectured that the clergy and nobles met in separate houses, after the manner of the Frankish parliaments held by Charlemagne, but that matters purely ecclesiastical were decided by the king and clergy alone. In general, however, all ecclesiastical canons, especially where they affected any temporal or civil rights, were confirmed by the assent of the witan, such assent being signified by the subscription of the king and nobles to the acts of the council.[1] Of such a nature are the numerous laws relating to the payment of tithes and other ecclesiastical dues, which are to be found in the acts of Anglo-Saxon councils, as also those which relate to marriage within certain degrees of kindred or affinity, or which contain provisions for the due observance of the Sunday, or for the stricter celebration of fasts and festivals. There are even instances of the witan legislating about matters of a nature more strictly ecclesiastical, as the appointment of festival days to be observed in the Church, and the regulation of sundry matters respecting the life and conversation of priests and deacons, canons, monks, and religious women.[2]

5. Next to the government and regulation of the clergy

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[1] Lingard, vol. i. p. 111.; Kemble, vol. ii. pp. 189. 203.

[2] Kemble, vol. ii. pp. 222, 223.; Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 309. 371.

by the means of diocesan, provincial, or national synods, one of the most important functions of the bishops, was what is technically called *jurisdictio fori interni*, their jurisdiction in matters of conscience over the members of the Church. This, though more properly belonging to the episcopal office, was by degrees, for convenience, delegated to the parish priests as the bishop's vicars and representatives. The notions of freedom of thought, and personal independence, to which as Englishmen and Protestants we are habituated from our childhood, render it difficult for us to conceive any idea of compulsory Church discipline exercised over the lay members of a church, except what consists in the exclusion from the privileges of Church communion for any moral offence. The minister of the gospel is, according to our view, not so much the possessor of some awful spiritual power, as the bearer of an unspeakable blessing ; he is an "ambassador for Christ," whose duty it is to exhort men to "be reconciled to God," rather than to compel them by spiritual censures to do His commandments. His ministry of reconciliation is "to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind," not by any power of his own, but by the ministry of God's holy word and sacraments, by bidding them come to Him "who is the way, the truth, and the life," "that they may have life," by assuring them of their personal interest in the redemption of Him who "came into the world to save sinners." If men refuse to be reconciled, if they "put the word from them and judge themselves unworthy of eternal life," the minister's work is, for the present and until some more favourable opportunity arises, as far as *they* are concerned, at an end : "he hath delivered his soul," he is not their judge to inflict punishments upon them for their contumacy ; he has "not dominion over their faith, but is a helper of their joy ;" if they refuse to hear his voice, they shut the door of life against themselves, they refuse to be saved.[1] Such, however, was not the view taken of the relation between the clergy and their flocks in the times of which we write. The former were considered rather as mediators between sinful man and his offended God, without whose intervention pardon of sin was not, in ordinary cases, bestowed. They were regarded as spiritual physicians, who had the cure of men's souls from the deadliest of all diseases, sin, committed to their charge, which they were to effect not by leading them to the one great Physician, who alone could heal them, but by treating them according to prescribed rules of art, the details of which were contained in certain elaborate treatises called Penitentials. These were works composed from time to time by bishops of great reputation and influence (such as Theodore and Egbert in England), for the purpose of directing priests how they were to deal with penitents, and what penances they were to impose on them, according to the nature and magnitude of their sins, and the circumstances under which those sins were committed. These works of Theodore and Egbert had the same authority with the Anglo-Saxon clergy, as the writings of Galen now have with the medical student, or the Pandects of Justinian or the Institutes of Sir E. Coke with the readers of civil or common law. These Penitentials may be said to embrace every known shade of human transgression, with the utmost minuteness, affixing to each a definite degree of penance. They have been aptly called "codes of criminal jurisprudence, enabling men to decide upon the precise nature of those inflictions here, which a due regard to the happiness of their souls hereafter was considered to exact."[2] According to this view of them, they are not merely based upon a false principle of theology, that God requires of each individual man a certain amount of suffering to atone for a certain amount of transgression; they may be considered as the exponents and oracles of that falsehood in its various branches and ramifications of error. After perusing a few pages of the Penitentials of Theodore and Egbert, though we may give the writers credit for good intentions, we cannot but regard them as melancholy proofs of the weakness and folly which sought to "square and shape the unlimited mercy of God, by the rule and measure of mere human intelligence."[1]

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[1] 2 Cor. v. 18. 20.; Luke, iv. 18.; John, xiv. 6.; 1 Tim. i. 15.; Acts, xiii. 46.; Ezek. xxxiii. 9.; 2 Cor. i. 24.

[2] Soames's Bampton Lectures, p. 264.

In order to impose the rules of this penitential discipline an unreserved intercourse between the priest and the sinner was indispensable. The physician could not prescribe without an accurate knowledge of the disease of his patient, with all its symptoms. Hence the necessity of auricular confession, which we find plainly inculcated in the oracles of Anglo-Saxon theology.

Thus the Confessional of Archbishop Egbert begins with this description of the manner in which a penitent is to make his confession. "When any one shall approach his confessor, he ought to prostrate himself humbly before him with very great fear of God, and ask him weeping to prescribe him a penance for all those offences which he may have committed against the will of God; and he ought to confess to him his evil deeds, that the priest may know what sort of penance he ought to prescribe." Then the confessor is directed to question him upon his faith, his repentance, his forgiveness of others, and to exhort him to fast, and abstain from all deadly sin, and to love the Lord with all his mind, and strength, and heart, and to be kind to the poor, to be liberal in almsgiving, frequent in attendance at church, and diligent in the payment of tithes; and, finally, he is enjoined to obtain from the penitent a full confession of all his misdeeds.[2]

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[1] Kemble, vol. ii. p. 403.

[2] Thorpe, vol. ii. pp. 131. 133.

In a set of penitential canons, enacted under king Edgar, we have fuller information upon this subject, and an explanation of the principles, which were to regulate the confessor's dealing with the penitent. The preface to these canons expresses very strongly the benefit to be derived from confession. "When any one shall wish to make confession of his sins, let him act like a man, and not blush to confess his crimes and wickedness by accusing himself; because thence comes pardon, and because without confession there is no forgiveness; for confession heals, confession justifies, confession gives pardon for sins." Afterwards follow the instructions for the confessor, who is required to bear in mind, that he is never to adjudge the same to the powerful and to the lowly, to the free and to the slave, to the old and to the young, to the hale and to the sickly, to the humble and to the proud, to the strong and to the feeble, to those in orders and to laymen. "In every deed (we are told) a discreet judge shall wisely distinguish, how it be done, and where, or when: and always, as a man is mightier, or of higher degree, so shall he the more deeply amend wrong before God and before the world."[1] On the other hand, the penitent is required to make a profession of his faith, and also a particular confession "to Almighty God and to the confessor the spiritual leech," of all sins of thought, word, or deed, of commission or neglect, descending to the most minute details.

Having thus, in the language of the canon, "vomited the venom out that was within him,"—that is, having purified himself by confession,—he was in a proper condition for the leech to work a cure. We are told, in the same canons, that after confession a man might, with penitence, quickly merit God's mercy; but that a rational repentance depended greatly on the wisdom of the confessor.[2] It was for the confessor to prescribe what works of a penitential nature were to be done by way of satisfaction for sin, and so as to apportion the measure of punishment to the degree of guilt. In giving these directions, he was to follow the Penitential as a general guide, with the power to qualify its rigour according to the principles of equitable indulgence which were stated above. The letter of the law, however, was very precise with respect to certain definite crimes, and in general the punishment prescribed was fasting for a longer or shorter period, according to the nature and circumstances of the case. The more pardonable sins of frailty or surprise might be expiated by ten, or twenty, or thirty days' fast; crimes of a deeper dye required for their expiation fasts of five, or seven, or ten years, or even a whole life of penance. We may observe that one of these penitential canons assigns, as a penance for murder committed by a mass-priest or a monk, forfeiture of orders, and a fast of ten years, during five of which he was, for six days in the week, to fast continually on bread and water, and during the remaining five for three days only. To the same crime, committed by a deacon, or clerk in inferior orders, or a layman, fasts of seven years, six years, and five years respectively, were appointed for a penance. By another canon, if a mass-priest, or monk, or deacon, who had been married before ordination, took his wife again, after ordination, he was to fast as for murder. One who slew an ecclesiastic, or his nearest kinsman, was to leave his country and estate, and do as the Pope directed him. and ever lament his deed. When the period of the rigorous fast on bread and water had expired, the penitent was allowed, for a certain number of days in the week, to adopt a more nutritious diet, which excluded only the flesh of quadrupeds and fowls.[1]

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[1] Thorpe, vol. ii. pp. 261—265.

[2] Ibid. p. 281.

In process of time this severe discipline was mitigated by a system of substitutions and commutations. Thus we are told in the above-mentioned canons: "Penances are devised in various ways, and a man may also redeem much with alms. He who has the ability, let him raise a church to the glory of God, and, if he have the means, let him give land thereto; and let young men be drawn thither, who may there serve for him, and may there daily minister to God; and let him also be a benefactor everywhere to God's Church."[1] In explanation of this principle, various good works are mentioned, which might be of use for the satisfaction of penances; as the making of roads, the building of bridges, the helping of poor men, widows, step-children, and foreigners, and the redemption of slaves. Again, another mode of mitigation of fasts was devised, which was originally invented for the benefit of the sick and infirm, but in process of time was extended to others also. Theodore and Egbert both allowed, in the case of the penitent being unable to fast, that he should sing a certain number of psalms and prayers, or give a sum of money in alms for an equivalent.[2] In conformity with this view of the subject, the 18th of the above-mentioned Penitential Canons allowed one day's fast to be redeemed with the payment of a penny, or the singing of two hundred and twenty psalms, or with the singing of the 119th Psalm six times, together with six Pater Nosters. A year's fast might be redeemed with thirty shillings, or with freeing a slave that was worth the money. A seven years' fast might be completed in twelve months, one mass being considered equivalent to twelve days' fasting, ten masses to a fast of four months, thirty masses to a fast of twelve months.[3]

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[1] Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 273.; Lingard, vol. i. p. 335.

Moreover, sinners, whose offences were so numerous as to render an expiation of them, according to the letter of the canons, impossible, were allowed to call in the assistance of others, whose prayers and alms might make up for their own deficiencies. Such persons were accustomed to purchase the goodwill of the clergy and monks, and even to enrol themselves among the members of monastic institutions, in the hope of partaking in the merit of the good works performed by these societies.[1] The practice of making an abatement or commutation of the satisfactory fastings and other expiatory works enjoined by the priest to a penitent, was strongly condemned by the council of Cloveshoo, as "a new-invented conceit of men's own will, grown into a custom dangerous to many," but without effect. Equally ineffectual, apparently, was the indignant censure pronounced by the same council against the still greater abuse of the substitution of the psalmody, fasting, and alms of others, for the acts of the penitent; which evil had grown to such a magnitude that a case had recently occurred of a man boasting that his sin was so fully expiated, that, if he could live three hundred years longer, his fasting was already paid by this new mode of satisfaction.[2]

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[1] Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 283.

[2] Ibid. pp. 67—70. 135. 222, 223.

[3] Ibid. pp. 285. 287.

Notwithstanding this censure, the penitential canons of Edgar distinctly recognise this mode of vicarious penance as allowable, and prescribe the manner in which a powerful man, rich in friends, may, with the assistance of a hundred and twenty persons fasting for him each three days, complete, in a very short time, a seven years' penance. At the same time they require him to do some part of the penance himself, and perform deeds of mercy, and promise amendment of life, before absolution is given; and though it is declared that this alleviation of penance is permitted to one who is powerful and rich in friends, it is acknowledged that one not possessing means may not so proceed; and also that it is most just, that every one avenge his own misdeeds on himself with diligent satisfaction; for it is written, "Every one shall bear his own burden."[1]

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[1] Lingard, vol. i. p. 338.

[2] Johnson, vol. i. p. 256. 259.

In the case of offences of less magnitude, after the confession of the penitent, the priest in general pronounced at once the prayer of absolution. Where, however, a lengthened course of penance was required, this ceremony was deferred, and in the mean time the priest was ordered diligently to inquire, with what compunction and exactness the penitent performed the satisfaction enjoined, and to give him absolution accordingly.[2]

It is to be observed, that the forms of absolution, during the Anglo-Saxon period, were expressed in the language of a prayer, and not of a declaration; the declaratory form was not introduced before the middle of the 13th century.[3]

Such was the general nature of the system of penitential discipline adopted by our ancestors. Its unsoundness, in a theological point of view, is so obvious, that we need say no more upon this head, than that even those who sanctioned it seem to have had their misgivings upon the question whether, after all, it was of any value in the sight of God. This is shown by the directions which occur from time to time in the canons, that the penitent should, even after the penance is finished, ever lament his sin. In particular, there is one of them which prescribes a seven years' fast for a homicide, where the person slain had committed no crime, and this reason for such continued lamentation is given, that it is not known to him how acceptable his satisfaction is with God.[4] As to the moral effects of such a system in a rude and barbarous age, though we might expect some good to flow from any code of positive law (however erroneous in its principles), which tended to check crime by the fear of punishment, the amount of this good must have been very greatly lessened by the system of commutation and vicarious penance, which unquestionably tended to debase, instead of exalting, the standard of morals among the people.

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[1] Thorpe, vol. ii. pp. 287. 289.

[2] Johnson's Canons, vol. i. p. 432.; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 267.; Lingard, vol. i. p. 333.

[3] Marshall's Penitential Discipline of the Primitive Church, p. 146. Johnson's Canons, vol. i. p. 427.; ibid. vol. ii. p. 215.

[4] Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 267.

6. There remains to be mentioned a part of the discipline of the Church, which appears to have been derived from primitive times, and the restoration of which is declared, in the preface to the Commination Service of our Prayer Book, to be a thing much to be wished. This relates to persons "convicted of notorious sin," who had caused public scandal by their offences, and who owed a public amends to the congregation whom they had offended by their evil example. The season of Lent, a period which, from the early ages of Christianity, had been devoted to humiliation for sin, and which, in the Anglo-Saxon Church, was kept as a suitable time for enjoining and performing penance, was the season chosen for the public humiliation and reconciliation of notorious offenders. On Ash Wednesday these penitents were collected at the porch of the Cathedral; they were then introduced into the nave, while some of the penitential psalms were sung in the choir. After this the bishop laid his hands on them, placed sackcloth and ashes on their heads, and announced that, as Adam for his disobedience had been excluded from Paradise, so they for their transgressions would be excluded from the Church. They then walked to the porch, while the anthem was sung: "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread, until thou return to the dust from which thou wert taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The doors of the church were then shut against them, and they withdrew to their homes, or to the place appointed for performing their penance. On the Thursday before Easter the doors of the Church were again thrown open to them. They lay prostrate in the nave, while four psalms with the Litany

were chanted, repeating to themselves "God be merciful to me a sinner." Then the bishop, at the request of the archdeacon, ascended the pulpit and pronounced over them the prayer of absolution. They were now restored to full communion, and were permitted to partake with their brethren in the holy sacrament of the Supper of the Lord as a pledge of their reconciliation.[1]

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[1] Capitula of Theodore, Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 70.; Wheatley on the Book of Common Prayer, p. 220.; Lingard, vol. i. pp. 342—344.; See also Thorpe, vol. ii. pp. 178. 266.

CHAP. XII.

LITURGY, RITUAL, CEREMONIES, AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH. — INFLUENCE OF THE CLERGY AND MONKS UPON SOCIAL QUESTIONS.

THE ecclesiastical system of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, being derived in a great measure from Roman missionaries, naturally adopted for the most part the ritual and ceremonies of the Church of their teachers. If we compare the forms of public worship and the administration of the sacraments and other rites, which our Reformed Church has adopted, with those which were in use in Anglo-Saxon times, it will probably appear that everything has been retained that was consistent with sound doctrine, or tending to edification, while much has been swept away that was cumbrous, questionable, and tending to superstition. Some notice of the principal forms and ceremonies in use in the Anglo-Saxon Church seems necessary for the right understanding of the subject of this work, although it would be inconsistent with its purpose to enter into minute details.

1. Among the offices relating to public worship, the foremost place from very early times has been given by Christians to the celebration of the Eucharist, and the name of Liturgy has been appropriated by ecclesiastical writers to the office of the Holy Communion exclusively. One of the most ancient forms of Liturgy was the Roman[1], which, as modified by some of the earlier popes, and especially Gregory the Great, was introduced by Augustine into Britain; although, as we have seen, that missionary was not required to adhere strictly to the

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[1] Palmer's Origines Liturgicæ, vol. i. p. 111—119.

Roman ritual, but had permission to choose from the observances of the Gallican, or any other Church, whatever he might deem pious, religious, and proper.[1] How far this permission was used is uncertain, but it appears that the observance of the three Rogation Days, before the Feast of Ascension Day, was a practice unknown to the Roman Church in Augustine's time, but adopted in Saxon England from the beginning, and also that a solemn form of blessing was introduced from the Gallican Liturgy into the Anglo-Saxon Communion service after the breaking of the consecrated bread.[2] There can be no doubt, however, that the forms of the Roman ritual were generally observed in England, except where the Scottish Liturgy had been originally introduced. The Council of Cloveshoo, A. D. 742, decreed, that the great festivals of our Lord's economy in the flesh should be celebrated according to the Roman ritual, in the office of baptism, the celebration of mass, and in the manner of singing, and that the nativities of the saints should be kept according to the Roman martyrology.[3] From this time the use of the Roman ritual prevailed still more in the English Church, though the Scottish Liturgy retained its ground at York till 796. Still there was no strict uniformity of usage in every church or monastery. Each bishop or abbot considered himself at liberty to make variations in the Liturgy and offices of his own church. Thus, in the chanting of the psalms, sometimes the Latin version from the Greek of the Septuagint was adopted from the Roman Church, sometimes the translation of Jerome from the Hebrew was introduced from the Gallican ritual. In the Benedictine monasteries the course of Benedict generally superseded the sacramentary of Gregory.

The diversities of practice which thus arose continued to the time of the Reformation; whence we find the different uses of the churches of Sarum, Hereford, Bangor, York, and Lincoln, referred to in the Preface to our Book of Common Prayer.[1]

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[1] Bede, lib. i. cap. 27.

[2] Lingard, vol. i. p. 295.; Canons of Cloveshoo, cap. 16.

[3] Johnson, vol. i. p. 249.

The canons required that the Holy Communion should be celebrated in a consecrated building, except in cases of sickness or during war, when it might be celebrated in a tent; and they also contained particular directions with respect to the quality of the vessels to be used in the celebration, as also of the eucharistic bread. The communion was always administered in both kinds, first to the clergy, and then to the people.[2]

2. We find, from ecclesiastical history, that it was usual with the early Christians to hold assemblies for prayer at night, or in the early morning. In after times the number of the hours of prayer in the Western Churches was increased to seven, in conformity with the Psalmist's declaration, "Seven times a day do I praise Thee."[3] The night service was joined to that originally appointed for the early morning, or lauds, and both were celebrated in the early morning, under the name of matins. There were also public prayers at the first hour or prime, the third, sixth, and ninth hours, and two evening services, called vespers and compline. At these services in the Anglo-Saxon Church the presence of the laity was desired, while the clergy were commanded to attend them, that they might pray for those whom secular pursuits, or want of education, rendered incompetent for the duty of prayer. The devotions for these canonical hours, as they were called, consisted for the most part of psalmody without lessons, and terminated with prayers.[4] The services both for the Holy Communion and for daily prayers were in general, with some

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[1] Palmer, vol. i. pp. 186—188.; Lingard, vol. i. pp. 298—300.

[2] Thorpe, vol. ii. pp. 385. 253. 405.; Lingard, vol. i. p. 326.

[3] Ps. cxix. 164.

[4] Palmer, vol. i. pp. 201—206.; Lingard, vol. i. p. 297.

exceptions, chanted by the choir, but in some churches the custom of reading the psalms at the canonical hours prevailed. The practice of chanting was derived from Rome, and such importance was attached to it by the Anglo-Saxon Church, that even bishops undertook to be teachers of the art![1]

3. With respect to the Sacrament of Baptism, during the earlier period of the work of the conversion of England the simplest forms sufficed for the missionaries, and rivers and running waters, in the open air and in the presence of multitudes, supplied the place of baptisteries and fonts for the performance of this rite.[2] Afterwards, it became customary, except in case of sickness, to administer baptism on the eves of Easter and Whitsunday only, and in the baptistery or building attached to each church for the purpose. In the course of time, as the multitude of single baptisms continued to increase, the baptisteries themselves were neglected, and a font of wood or stone was placed in the parish church. The adult candidate for baptism was subjected to a previous instruction and examination, and was required not only to testify his faith by repetition of the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed, but also to renounce the devil, his works, and his pomps.

As soon as Christianity was firmly established in the land, the practice of baptizing infants was also introduced, and even enforced by law, as has been before mentioned. The clergyman through whose neglect a child died unbaptized, was liable to a forfeiture of his benefice, and even of the privileges of his order: and the duty of baptizing infants in danger of death was enjoined by Theodore's Penitential, in case of necessity to laymen and women.[3] In the case of infant baptism the sponsors were examined as to their qualifications for the office, and then they made the profession of faith and the renunciations in the name of the child; but in other respects the same forms, as nearly as possible, were observed as in the baptism of adults; and in both cases the ceremony was followed by confirmation, and the administration of the Holy Communion to the person baptized, this rite being administered in the case of infants, by the priest dipping his finger into the chalice, and applying the consecrated wine to the child's mouth.[1]

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[1] Bede, lib. iv. cap. 2.; lib. v. cap. 20.

[2] Ibid. lib. ii. cap. 14.

[3] Thorpe, vol. ii. pp. 25. 51.

4. A law of Edgar, which enjoined the clergy to see that no one be too long unconfirmed, seems to imply that the rite of confirmation was administered to children at an early age, even when it did not immediately follow baptism. It appears from Bede's life of Cuthbert, that it was the custom in his time for bishops to travel about their dioceses for the purpose of confirming those who had been recently baptized.[2] The practice of confirming infants seems to convert the important rite of confirmation into something like a charm, and we cannot but commend the wisdom of the reformers of our services, in appointing this ceremony to be used only for those who have come to years of discretion.

5. The solemnity of marriage among the Anglo-Saxons was partly of a civil, and partly of a religious character. The bridegroom having first entered into a covenant with the bride's friends as to a suitable provision for her, the parties mutually gave pledges and sureties to each other for the fulfilment of the contract. They were then said to be wedded or betrothed, but the marriage did not necessarily take place. If however it proceeded, the presence of a mass-priest was required by law to make the union binding. The ceremony was celebrated partly in the porch of the church, and partly in the chancel, where both parties partook of the Holy Communion. The custom of the publication of banns appears to have been of later introduction, and it is not until the

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[1] Lingard, vol. i. pp. 317—320.; Johnson, vol. i. p. 266.; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 392.; see also Bingham, lib. xii. cap. i.

[2] Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 247.; Lingard, vol. i. p. 322.

13th century, that we find it expressly ordered, that no marriage should be contracted without the banns being thrice published.[1] The celebration of marriages was forbidden on great festivals, on the Ember days, from the beginning of Advent till the octave of the Epiphany, and from Septuagesima till fifteen days after Easter. Marriages were not permitted between relations within the fourth degree; nor was a man allowed to marry the widow of a person so nearly related to him, or his deceased wife's near relations, or a nun, or his godmother, or a woman who had been divorced, or to have more wives than one.[2]

6. The office of setting apart certain persons for the work of the ministry, was performed in the Anglo-Saxon Church, according to the practice derived from apostolical times, by the imposition of the hands of the chief ministers of the Church with solemn prayer. In the case of the ordination of a deacon or priest, the imposition of the hands of a single bishop was sufficient, although it was usual for the presbyters present to join in laying hands on a fellow presbyter: but for the consecration of a bishop the concurrence of at least three bishops was required. The times appointed for the ceremony of the ordination of priests and deacons were the four Ember weeks, returning with the four seasons of the year; and a previous inquiry into the characters, and examination of the qualifications of candidates for these holy orders, were considered indispensable. In general no one might be ordained deacon till he had reached his twenty-fifth, or priest before his thirtieth year; but as the bishop had a discretionary power of relaxing these regulations, there were instances of persons being ordained at a much earlier age, among whom the venerable Bede was admitted to deacon's orders at the age of nineteen. It was required that the

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[1] Johnson's Canons, vol. ii. p. 91.

[2] Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 257. 319. 365.; Lingard, vol. ii. p. 9.

candidates should be free not only from the sins of idolatry, witchcraft, murder, fornication, theft and perjury, which, even though repented of, offered insuperable bars to their admission into the ministry; but also from such outward blemishes, as deformity of body, illegitimacy of birth and servile descent. If a candidate had been married, he was required to show either that his wife was dead, or that he had altogether separated from her. If he had been married more than once, he was for ever excluded from admission to the offices of deacon, priest, or bishop.[1]

7. The ceremony of pronouncing a blessing on a female taking upon herself the vows of perpetual virginity, was considered among the Anglo-Saxons a work of such importance, as to be worthy to be reserved for the bishop alone, and to be celebrated on the chief festivals of the year. No person was allowed to take these vows, until she had attained her twenty-fifth year; but the engagement so made was considered irrevocable by the law of the State, as well as that of the Church, and a subsequent marriage not only was declared null and void, but subjected her to the severest spiritual penalties.[2]

8. But the appointed ministers of the gospel, and those who had given themselves to the exclusive profession of a religious life, were not the only persons who were set apart for their work and office by solemn religious rites. Even the sword of the candidate for knighthood was delivered to the wearer with the priest's benediction, and he himself was not invested with the honour which he sought without first partaking of the Eucharist.[3] The inauguration of a sovereign was attended with more impressive religious solemnities, inasmuch as he was called to far higher functions.

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 17—25.; Bede's Eccles. Hist. lib. v. cap. 24.

[2] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 11—15.; Thorpe, vol. i. p. 66.

[3] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 2—4.; Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. iii. pp. 138—141.

This practice, derived probably from the Christian Roman Emperors, appears, from the testimony of the historian Gildas, to have existed among the Britons, after the departure of the Roman legions from the island. From them it was probably received by the Christian kings of Ireland. In two lives of Columba, written in the 7th century, it is said that he blessed and ordained Aidan, king of the Scots, according to the directions of the Book of the Ordination of Kings. At what time this rite was adopted by the Anglo-Saxon princes, we are not informed; but in the Pontifical of Archbishop Egbert there is a form for the coronation of kings, so that it must have been in use in the 8th century. The most remarkable feature of this ceremony is the coronation oath, the substance of which is contained in Egbert's Pontifical, and which amounted to a formal compact between the sovereign and his people. By this oath the king promised three things. 1st. That God's Church and all Christian folk of his realm should hold true peace always. 2nd. That he would prohibit rapine and every sort of injustice to men of all ranks. The third thing promised is what the sovereign still promises in the modern coronation oath, viz. that he would command justice with mercy to be observed in all judgments; and it is pleasing to find that this mixture of justice with mercy has ever been considered the proper function of a British Sovereign.[1]

9. The consecration or dedication of new churches was performed by the bishop of the diocese, either alone or assisted by other prelates, and was an event which the Anglo-Saxons, like the Christians of the 4th century, celebrated with great pomp and festivity. The dedication of Wilfrid's basilica at Ripon was attended by the king of Northumbria, his brother, and their earldomen; that of the Church of Ramsey by the thanes of the six neighbouring counties; and when the cathedral of Winchester was restored by Ethelwold not

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 28, 29.

only king Ethelred and his court, but the metropolitan and eight other bishops, were present at the ceremony.

The rite of consecration was not confined to the building itself. The altar, to which a peculiar reverence was paid, as the place appointed for celebrating the Eucharistic commemoration of the Lord's death, was separately consecrated with especial prayers and ceremonies; and even the furniture, utensils, vestments, and ornaments of the church, as well as the baptistery, font, and churchyard, received their peculiar benedictions. In addition to these questionable ceremonies, the superstition of the age required the deposit of relics or supposed relics in a new church, a practice, which in the 9th century was varied, as we have seen, by permitting the substitution for relics of part of the Eucharistic bread consecrated on the occasion.[1]

It was usual to read from the porch the charter of the endowment of the new church, and sometimes other interesting additions were made to the ceremony. Thus, on the dedication of the abbey of Winchcombe in Mercia, A.D. 811, Kenulf, king of Mercia, liberated his captive, Eadbert Pren, king of Kent, before the altar, and in addition to this act of royal munificence, he distributed splendid gifts and sums of money to all who were present, from the bishops and nobles to the humblest of the people.[2]

10. As knowledge and civilisation made progress in Saxon England, some evidences of their advance began to appear in the application of the fine arts to the building and ornamenting of churches. Instead of the rude wooden edifice, thatched with reeds and plastered with mud, with perforations to admit the air and light, we read, even so early as the 7th century, of stone churches, with roofs covered with lead, and with

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[1] Supra, chap. VII.

[2] Malmsbury's Kings of England, lib. i. cap. 4.; Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 36—43.

windows of glass, surrounded by several porticoes and supported by rows of pillars.[1]

From the latter part of the 7th century, a more expensive and ornamental style of ecclesiastical architecture began to prevail, and the decorations of the interior of the sacred edifices were even more magnificent than the buildings themselves. On solemn festivals the walls of the richer churches were covered with hangings of silk. In some of these, the altar was covered with plates of gold and silver, and ornamented with precious gems; the vessels employed in the service for the Holy Communion, and the cross upon the altar, being also of the same costly materials. The books used for divine service partook of the same magnificence; for we are told that Wilfrid had the four Gospels written in letters of gold on a purple ground, and presented them to the church of Ripon, in a golden casket adorned with precious stones.[2] Besides all this, the aid of light and music was called in to heighten the effect of the scene. The space within the chancel, called the sanctuary[3], was illuminated with a number of lights which were ordered to be kept burning during the celebration of mass; the air also was perfumed with a profusion of incense from censers suspended from the ceiling, while the organ (the use of which was known in the time of Aldhelm, and perhaps sooner, and which formed an important part of the furniture of an Anglo-Saxon church,) pealed forth its solemn notes, to accompany the voices of a numerous choir.[4]

Moreover, from the time of Bennet Biscop, it became customary to ornament the walls of churches with paintings on religious subjects. That learned monk seems to have adopted this practice, as a method of giving some instruction upon Scriptural subjects to those who could not read. Thus, in

[1] Bede, lib. iii. cap. 25.

[2] Bede, lib. v. cap. 19.

[3] Bingham, lib. viii. cap. vi. § 2.

[4] Lingard, vol. i. pp. 263—266.; Ibid. vol. ii. p. 370—377.; Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 253.

one series of paintings, he represented the history of our Lord Jesus Christ from the Gospels; in another, he endeavoured by the same means to show the fulfilment of the types of the Old Testament, by the events recorded by the evangelists. Thus above a painting of Isaac bearing the wood for his sacrifice, he placed another of our Saviour bearing His cross to Calvary; above that of the brazen serpent, he suspended one representing our Saviour hanging on the cross.[1] That such a practice might be turned to a good account is obvious, although it is equally clear that it might very easily be abused for purposes of idolatry and superstition. Whether the use of paintings and images was so abused by our Anglo-Saxon ancestors may be a matter of doubt; but there can be no question that the image of the cross was, both in religious processions and as an ornament of the altar, made the object of some religious veneration. By this was intended (we are told by the Saxon homilist), "not an idolatrous worship paid to the wood or metal of which the cross was formed, but a worship paid to the Almighty Lord, who was fixed to the cross for our sake."[2] This was most probably the intention of those who were able to make such a distinction; but what else could such veneration have been, in the eyes of the illiterate and unthinking vulgar, but simple idolatry?

11. The Anglo-Saxon Church, while it appointed suitable services for every day of the week, reserved the more solemn celebration of Divine worship for Sundays and festival-days. The reverential observance of Sunday was a prominent feature in the religion of Saxon England. The laws of king Ine of Wessex show, that from an early period our Anglo-Saxon forefathers sought to provide, as far as legislative measures could attain that object, that the Lord's day might be kept as a day of sacred rest. The Sabbath of the old dispensation

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 106, 107.

[2] Saxon Homily, quoted by Lingard, vol. ii. p. 109.

had been honoured as the day of God's rest from the work of Creation; and when the compulsory observance of the seventh day ceased, together with the other ordinances of the law, Christianity still enjoined the veneration of the first day of the week, as commemorating the beginning of the new creation, in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead. It was therefore, not in slavish subjection to the letter of a carnal ordinance, but in a spirit worthy of the liberty of the Gospel, that our ancestors appointed the cessation on the Sunday of all labour of the field and of handicraft, of all sports, pleasures, traffic, feuds, and public business, with such reasonable exceptions in favour of works of necessity, as had been sanctioned by divine authority.[1] The most remarkable feature in this legislation was the protection it gave to the bondman, by not only imposing a fine on the lord who compelled him to work, but by declaring him, in case of such compulsion being used, to be absolutely free.[2] The interval from sunset on the Saturday to sunset on the Sunday was called a day of freedom, and this period of freedom was in after times enlarged, so as to extend from the hour of none on Saturday to the dawn of light on Monday morning.[3]

With respect to the religious services on Sunday, it was ordered by the canons of Cloveshoo[4], that on the Lord's Day the abbots and priests should remain in their monasteries and churches, and say solemn mass—that they should by preaching instruct those who were subject to them from the oracle of the Holy Scriptures, in the rules of religious conversation and good living,—and that on that day and the great festivals, the priests of God should often invite the people to meet in the church, to hear the word of God, and be often present at the sacrament of the masses, and at preaching of sermons. The laity, both males and females, whatever might be their rank, were all commanded to attend at high and solemn mass in the parish church, and hear the preaching of God's Holy Word.[1]

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[1] Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 321. 369.; vol. ii. p. 421.

[2] Laws of Ine, cap. 3.; Thorpe, vol. i. p. 105.

[3] Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 265. 369.; Lingard, vol. i. p. 311. The hour of none is half-way between mid-day and sunset.

[4] Johnson, vol. i. p. 249.

Besides the Sunday, there were many festival days, for which special solemn services were appointed, and which were kept in honour of the principal events connected with the history of our redemption, or in memory of Apostles, Saints, and Martyrs. In the beginning of the 9th century such holidays were confined to the festivals of Christmas and the Epiphany, the three days after Easter Sunday, the day kept in honour of the supposed assumption of the Virgin Mary (Aug. 15th), and the commemoration of the Apostles Peter and Paul, of Pope Gregory the Great, and of all the saints. Before the reign of Edgar this number was considerably augmented, and in the reigns of Ethelred and Cnut, other additions were made.[2]

12. The days of fasting appointed by the Anglo-Saxon Church were, 1st, the forty days of Lent, which began on the seventh Wednesday before Easter; 2ndly, the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday of the four Ember weeks; 3rdly, the three Rogation days before Ascension day; 4thly, all the Fridays in the year; 5thly, after A.D. 1000 the vigils, or evenings before St. Mary's solemn feast-tides and those of every Apostle.[3] In this respect the rules of the Anglo-Saxon Church agreed nearly with the rubric of the Book of Common Prayer; but the Fridays and vigils, which might fall between Christmas-day and the octave day of the Epiphany and between Easter and Whitsuntide, were not to be kept as fasting days. The observance of appointed fasts was strictly enjoined, on pain of incurring the wrath of God;

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[1] Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 443.

[2] Lingard, vol. i. p. 314.

[3] Johnson, vol. i. p. 250.; Thorpe, vol. i. p. 265.; Lingard, vol. i. Note N.

and it was also declared that fasting ought to be accompanied with alms, as being thereby made more acceptable to God. At the same time it was declared that the practice should not be carried so far as to injure health, but that a reasonable indulgence should be allowed to those who from infirmity were unable to abstain from the more nutritious kinds of food. "Drunkenness from wine, and sinful lusts are forbidden, not milk nor cheese. The Apostle said not,—eat neither cheese, nor eggs, but he said, 'do not over drink yourselves with wine, nor other drinks in which be sinful pleasure.'"[1]

Besides the forms and ceremonies, which relate to the celebration of public worship, and to the setting apart persons or things for sacred purposes, there are certain practices which, though not purely and exclusively of a religious character, seem to require notice, as indicating the degree and kind of influence which religion exercised over the minds of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors. Of such a nature are the custom of investing consecrated places with the privilege of Sanctuary, the Peace of the Church, Ordeal, and the practice of making Pilgrimages. After giving some account of these things I propose to conclude this Chapter with some remarks upon the influence of the clergy and monks upon some important social questions.

1. The right of Sanctuary, under the name of the right of asylum, had been recognised of old, both by the Greeks and Romans, as a privilege belonging to the temples of their heathen Gods; and the same principle had been sanctified by divine authority in the appointment among the Jews of cities of refuge, whither the involuntary homicide might flee and live.[2] Under these circumstances, we cannot wonder that the same principle should have been at an early period, not by any positive law, but by traditional usage, transferred to the Christian Church. The effect of it in the earlier

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[1] Thorpe, vol. ii. pp. 113. 255. 439.

[2] Deut. iv. 41, 42.

ages of the Church seems to have been beneficial. The victims of civil tumults, slaves flying from the fury of their masters, or the sufferers from other persecutions, found refuge under the wing of the Church, until, by the pious interposition of the bishops and clergy, the fury of their adversaries could be appeased. So debtors obtained a temporary respite from the proceedings of their creditors, until by the alms of the faithful they were delivered from danger. Early in the 5th century, the right of sanctuary was recognised in the Eastern Empire by positive law, and even enlarged so far as to extend the privilege to all buildings within the precincts of the church.[1] Public debtors, however, Jews professing to turn Christians, heretics and apostates, as well as murderers, adulterers, and other persons guilty of heinous offences, were excluded from this benefit. These exceptions show (as has been well observed) that the true intent and meaning of the ancient laws relating to this privilege of sanctuary "was chiefly to protect the innocent, the injured, and the oppressed from violence; and in some hard or dubious cases, to grant a little respite, till a fair hearing might be procured, or some intercession made to the judges, by the bishop or clergy, for such persons as might seem to want it."[2] In the northern nations of Europe, in which (as among the Anglo-Saxons) a code of law existed, that recognised the right of personal retaliation for injuries, and permitted without rebuke the practice of private war, the right of sanctuary afforded, in behalf of the weak and the unfortunate, an useful check to the principle of barbarous justice. According to a law of king Ine, if any man was guilty of a capital offence, and fled to a church, he was to have his life, but he was obliged to make bot or compensation according to law. The protection only lasted for a time, during which he and his friends had the power of paying the legal compensation for the offence.

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[1] Neander, vol. iii. pp. 204—207.; Bingham, lib. viii. cap. ii.

[2] Bingham, lib. viii. cap. ii. § 8.

This period was by the laws of Alfred extended from three days to seven, if the fugitive could live so long without food, for none might be given him during the time of his abode in the place of refuge. He was not obliged to remain in the church itself, but there were certain apartments connected with the church, which seem to have been allotted to those who were in sanctuary. If a person in sanctuary confessed crimes which were not known before, half the penalty was to be forgiven him. If the allotted period elapsed without satisfaction being made, the offender was left to the regular course of justice. There were moreover certain flagrant crimes, as treason against the state, offences committed within the precincts of the church, and others, which in ordinary cases were excepted from the privilege, and those who were guilty of them might lawfully be dragged to punishment even from the foot of the altar. On the other hand, there were certain churches, as St. Peter's at Westminster, St. John's, Beverley, and others, which were considered of such awful sanctity, that he who sought an asylum there might be protected from the legal consequences of crimes of the greatest magnitude, and compel his pursuer to accept a pecuniary compensation.[1] The violation of the privilege of sanctuary was an offence punishable by pecuniary fine, varying in amount according to the dignity of the church the protection of which was broken. This fine was fixed by a law of Cnut's at five pounds, or two hundred and forty shillings, in the case of a chief minster, a hundred and twenty shillings for a minster of the middling class, sixty for a church with a burying-place where little service was done, and thirty for a field church without a burying-place.[2]

2. The peace, or truce of the Church, was an obser-

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[1] Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 65. 91. 105. 109. 359.; Joanson, vol. i. pp. 501, 502.; Lingard, vol. i. pp. 276, 277.

[2] Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 381. The Anglo-Saxon Pound seems to have contained forty-eight shillings.

vance of a nature similar to that of sanctuary, and one more worthy of our unqualified approbation. It was a noble testimony to the truth, that the Church was an institution derived from Him who was called the Prince of Peace, that in special seasons sanctified to the purposes of religion, all private feuds and warfare, trials by ordeal, and judicial oaths, were strictly forbidden by the ecclesiastical law. The seasons in which this blessed respite from the warfare of evil passions was proclaimed, comprehended not only every Sunday and every solemn festival and fast day, but periods of some duration, as from Advent to the octaves of Epiphany, from Septuagesima to the fifteenth day after Easter, and from Ascension Day to the eighth day after Whitsunday. Protection also was extended to all persons going to and from church for the purpose of devotion, or to the bishop for absolution, or to attend the dedication of churches or to synods or chapters. Those who violated this protection were punishable in the first instance in the bishop's court, and in case of the offender despising the ecclesiastical authorities, he might be handed over to the civil power.[1]

3. Another custom of a very questionable character, which prevailed among all the northern nations of Europe, and was solemnly recognised by Anglo-Saxon law, was that of trial by ordeal; which professed to leave the decision of the question of the guilt or innocence of a person accused of a crime to the intervention of the Most High. In clear cases of guilt a resort to ordeal was not permitted, but where the evidence was doubtful, and the accuser swore to the truth of the charge, which the accused denied also upon oath, the latter was allowed to establish his innocence by an appeal to what was called the judgment of God. The three days that immediately preceded the trial were spent by the accused in fasting and prayer. On the third day, after a solemn adju-

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[1] Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 93. 443.

ration had been delivered to him, not to receive the Eucharist, or go to the ordeal, if his conscience accused him of the crime, he received the holy communion, the ministering priest adding this prayer, as he gave him the elements; "May this body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ prove thee innocent or guilty this day." After the service, he again denied the charge upon oath, and was then led to the trial, of which there were four kinds. The first of these was by what was called the corsned; which was a cake of barley-bread of an ounce in weight. Over this the priest prayed that God would manifest the truth between the parties, and that if the accused were guilty he might tremble and look pale, when he took the cake in his hand, and that when he attempted to chew it, his jaws might be fixed, his throat contracted, and the bread thrown out of his mouth. The decision as to his guilt or innocence depended on the happening of these signs or not. The second kind of ordeal was by cold water, in which case the accused, having his hands bound cross-wise to his feet, being first sprinkled with blessed water and having kissed the cross on the altar with the book of the Gospel, was lowered naked with a cord fastened in a knot around his waist into a pool of water. If he sank so as to draw the knot below the water, he was considered as innocent, if he floated, as guilty. So far there seems nothing very formidable in this mode of trial. The same however cannot be said of the third and fourth kinds of ordeal by hot water and hot iron. For the ordeal by hot water, a caldron of water was prepared in the church, in which, at a certain depth below the surface of the water, a stone or piece of iron was placed. This depth was greater or less, according to the nature of the offence; the trial for the greater offences being known by the name of the *three-fold*, that for smaller offences, by the name of the *one-fold* ordeal. At the appointed time strangers were excluded, and the accuser and the accused proceeded to the place, each attended by twelve friends, who ranged themselves on opposite sides near the fire. The litany having been said by the priest, and it having been first ascertained that the water was of boiling heat, the accused plunged his naked arm into the cauldron and brought up the stone. The priest then wrapped up the arm in a clean linen cloth, and sealed it with the seal of the church. At the end of three days the seal was broken, and the bandage unfolded in the presence of the priest and the friends of both parties, and the fate of the accused depended on the state of his arm. If it were perfectly healed, he was safe, but not otherwise. In the fourth mode of trial, by hot iron, the same number of persons were required to attend as in the trial by hot water. The accused in this case had to carry a hot bar of iron, of the weight of from one to three pounds, according to the nature of his offence, in three steps, over a space equal to nine of his own feet. The burn was treated in the same manner, and the guilt or innocence of the party was made to depend on the same appearances as in the ordeal by hot water.[1]

With respect to these modes of trial it has been well observed, that it may afford matter for ingenious speculation to determine how a guilty person could ever be convicted under the two first kinds of ordeal, or an innocent man escape under the two last. Much, however, probably may be attributed to the terrors of a guilty conscience in the case of the corsned, and to the manner in which the body was tied and let down intothe water, in the trial by cold water ; and it may easily be conceived that a very dexterous person, or one who possessed a robust constitution of body, might escape the evil results of the two other modes of trial, though, in the absence of fraud or connivance, such instances of good fortune would rarely happen. Whatever theory may be adopted with respect to the solution of this difficulty, reason and Christianity concur in condemning a practice, equally repugnant to common sense, humanity, and justice. Such an institution as the trial by ordeal could only find favour in an age of the grossest ignorance, and amidst a people too barbarous to weigh the value of conflicting evidence, or to discern falsehood from truth. The clergy, to their honour, were the first to condemn the practice as superstitious; and in this instance the Popes set an example in maintaining the cause of truth, righteousness, and justice. Such, however, was the force of prejudice in favour of habits derived from a remote antiquity and from heathen ancestors, that the ordeal was not finally abolished in England till the 13th century in the reign of Henry III. One branch of it, the trial by cold water of persons suspected of witchcraft, lingered on as late as the commencement of the 18th century; and trial by wager of battle, which was the Norman method of appealing to the judgment of God, continued till very recent times.[1]

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[1] Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 227. 345.; Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 130—136.

4. Another practice, which our Anglo-Saxon ancestors adopted with the greatest ardour, and which was extensively encouraged by the Church, was that of making religious pilgrimages to Rome or Jerusalem. The distance of the latter city, the perils of the sea, and the circumstance of the Holy Land being in the hands of Mohammedan infidels, were obstacles sufficient to deter the great bulk of religious adventurers from making an attempt the success of which was so doubtful. The same objections, however, did not apply to a pilgrimage to Rome, which, as possessing churches and catacombs, which were the reputed resting places of Apostles and Martyrs, and as the see of one who was honoured as the successor of St. Peter, held forth the greatest attractions to the religious enthusiasm of the devout or the fanatic.[2]

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 137—139.; Johnson's Canons, vol. i. pp. 535, 536.; Lingard's Hist. of England, vol. iii. chap. ii.

[2] This was the case even in the 7th century. See Bede, Eccles. Hist. lib. iv. cap. 23.; lib. v. cap. 7.

Even this journey, however, could not be made without considerable danger from banditti and other marauders; so utterly lawless was the state of the population in that country, which was the proper sphere of the spiritual jurisdiction of him who claimed the right to give laws to the whole Church of Christ. We have mentioned before the efforts of Cnut to abate this evil, by procuring protection for English pilgrims from the princes through whose dominions they had to pass[1]: it does not appear, however, that those efforts produced any permanent effect. Still, notwithstanding these dangers, the number of pilgrims continually increased, and men of all ranks, clergy and laity, monks and nuns, crowded eagerly to this spiritual centre of attraction, with an ardour that no difficulties could overcome. Probably none who had anything to give, came empty-handed; and those who could give much did not spare their bounty. The munificent gifts of King Ethelwulf to Pope Benedict III., as well as to the clergy, nobility, and people of Rome, have been recorded by Italian writers; and we cannot doubt the willingness of the Popes and Roman clergy to encourage a propensity from which they derived so large profits.[2] Whether the pilgrims in general obtained any advantage sufficient to compensate them for all their toils and dangers, may be reasonably questioned. In some instances the pilgrimage had been undertaken as a commutation for penance, and they were in those cases delivered from the necessity of making any farther atonement: but in a moral point of view what did they gain by the journey? It has been said indeed, in justification of this religious folly of pilgrimages, that it promoted civilisation, by dissipating national prejudices, and bringing the remote Anglo-Saxon in close contact with Rome, the centre of knowledge, and the repository of all that was elegant in the west of Europe. On the other hand it is evident, that the evils produced by the separation of princes from their people, and bishops from their churches, at a time when the means of communication between this country and Italy were so tedious and difficult, and dangerous, must have considerably outweighed the advantages just mentioned; and it is distinctly recorded by impartial witnesses that the system of pilgrimages was in many cases destructive to the virtue of the female pilgrims. However, the practice, notwithstanding all the objections that might be alleged against it, seems to have been continued with unabated zeal throughout the reign of the Anglo-Saxon dynasty in England, and thenceforward till the period of the Reformation.[1]

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[1] Supra, Chap. IX.

[2] Lingard, vol. i. pp. 279—281.

5. We have seen, in the matter of the trial by ordeal, that the influence of the clergy was exercised, so as to bring about an important social improvement by the final abolition of that objectionable institution. The same praise may fairly be accorded to them for their exertions in diminishing the evils of slavery. In common with all other nations of Teutonic origin, the Saxons of England recognised the right of one part of the community to the compulsory service of another. Their slaves were originally acquired by conquest, the vanquished Britons who had remained in the country to submit to the yoke of the successful invaders. The posterity of these inherited the servile condition from their birth, and their numbers were continually increased by the addition of those whom crime or necessity, or the tyranny of a powerful neighbour, might, in a society which permitted private warfare, reduce from a state of freedom to the like servitude. The Penitential of Theodore shows, that even after Christianity had gained a footing in the country for nearly a hundred years, it was still lawful for a parent to deliver his child into slavery under the age of seven years.[2] In the eye of the law the slave was the absolute property of his lord,

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 126—130.

[2] Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 19.

a mere chattel that might be disposed of like an ox or a horse. He might even be so bound to the soil, as to be included in a conveyance of it with any other appurtenances. He could have no property of his own, his oath was not regarded, his body was liable to any amount of labour, for neglect of which he might be visited with unlimited corporal punishment; his offspring were under the same taint of servile blood, and subject to the same civil disabilities.[1] For this state of wretchedness some alleviation was procured by those merciful and truly Christian laws, which prohibited the compulsory labour of bondmen on Sundays and festivals: but a more lasting source of comfort to a person in such a situation arose from the possibility of his regaining his freedom by the voluntary act of his master. For this end the influence of the clergy was most beneficially employed; and though we must admit the superstitious nature of the motives which generally led to the emancipation of slaves, we ought perhaps to regard it upon the whole as an instance of the triumph of Christianity, that men's minds were directed to the fact, that "the thralls and the free were equally dear to God, and that He bought us all with equal value."[2] The very circumstance of the ordinary form of emancipation being manumission at the altar of the Church, gave a solemn religious sanction to this practice. We have mentioned before, the manumission of the two hundred and fifty slaves at Selsey by Wilfrid. These poor creatures were bound to the soil, which had been granted to Wilfrid by the king ot Sussex, and we are told that "he not only by baptism rescued them from the servitude of the devil, but gave them their bodily liberty also, and exempted them from the yoke of human servitude."[3] The numerous instances which occur in the records that have come down to us, of the manumission of slaves by will, show the extent to which that practice was carried, a circumstance which may probably be ascribed to the influence of the clergy.

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[1] See Kemble, vol. i. chap. viii., and Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. i. p. 216.

[2] Thorpe, vol. ii. p. 315.

[3] Bede, lib. iv. cap. 13.

Nor are our ecclesiastical records destitute of other proofs of a disposition to check the increase of slavery, and to alleviate the condition of the bondman. Theodore's Penitential is particularly strong in its denunciations against the crime of Christians selling Christians for slavery, and visits this practice, as well as that excess of cruelty which sometimes caused the death of a slave, with appropriate and severe penalties. Towards the latter part of the Anglo-Saxon period several laws were passed for the especial benefit of the slaves; and this humane legislation may be fairly attributed to the greater prevalence of Christian principles with respect to this important social question.[1]

6. Of a very similar nature to the influence exercised by the Church in behalf of the slave, was that which regarded the poor and destitute members of the community. When the payment of tithes was once established by custom, a certain provision for the poor followed as a necessary consequence. This was not enforced by any law of the state before the year 1014, when it was provided, by an express enactment of King Ethelred and his Witan, that a third of the tithe should go to God's poor and needy men in thraldom.[2] The liability of the tithe to the support of the poor had, however, been long before recognised both by Theodore and Egbert, as a thing to be enforced on the consciences both of clergy and laity, on religious grounds. The confessional of the latter prelate contains the following exhortation from the priest to the penitent: "Be thou gentle and charitable to the poor, zealous in almsgiving, in attendance at church, and in the giving of tithe to God's Church and the poor."[3] The fund thus available from the tithe was increased by a strenuous enforcement of the duty of

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[1] Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 23, 24. 50. 93. 337.; Kemble, vol. i. pp. 212, 213.

[2] Thorpe, vol. i. p. 343.

[3] Ibid. vol. ii. p. 132.

almsgiving, by the substitution of pecuniary commutations for penance, and by the doctrine strongly inculcated in some of the canons, with respect to the observance of fast days, that the meat and drink, which would otherwise have been eaten on those days ought to be bestowed upon the poor. Egbert required that a part of the spoil taken in war should be given to God's Church and be distributed among the poor; and a portion of the fines paid by offenders to the Church was directed by a law of Ethelred to be appropriated to this among other charitable purposes.[1] All these funds, from whatever source derived, were probably payable to the cathedral church of the district; and the distribution of them was left to the discretion of the bishop and the canons of the cathedral. The consequence of this was that the greater proportion of the destitute poor collected around the chief minster, to be fed and clothed for the love of God; they either formed a considerable portion of the population of the cathedral city, or were settled on the adjoining lands belonging to the minster, and rendered in return such services as they could give to their clerical lords. Every parish church, moreover, had its own house for the reception of strangers, called in Latin xenodochium [2], as well as its proper share of the public funds and also its own collections for charitable purposes, so that upon the whole the amount of relief provided for the support of the really destitute and infirm was very considerable. On the other hand, the facility of obtaining relief appears to have been protected from abuse by the Anglo-Saxon law of mutual assurance, which operated as a kind of law of settlement to prevent the idle from wandering about for the purpose of seeking charity. In short, without any regular form of a poor law, the Church originally imposed, as a matter of conscience on its members, the duty of providing for those who were in the extremity of need and destitution.

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[1] Thorpe, vol. ii. passim, pp. 65—437.

[2] Ibid. pp. 80. 101.

When the voluntary payments for religious purposes were enforced by legal sanctions, the law did not alter the mode of distribution, but left it in the hands of the clergy; thus securing at the same time two very important ends,—a certainty of provision for the needy, coupled with a moral restraint of the highest kind, that could be attained in those times, upon the abuse of that provision for unworthy purposes.[1]

Besides the public funds distributed by the clergy for the relief of the poor, it was their practice to encourage, as much as possible, eleemosynary foundations by pious laymen for the same object, as well as to establish such foundations themselves. The charters preserved to our time contain several instances of lands being charged with large sums of money, to supply copious doles of meat and drink as well as clothing for poor persons. For example, Archbishop Wulfrid, in the early part of the 9th century, ordered, among other such payments, that twelve hundred poor men should receive on his anniversary, each a loaf of bread and a cheese, or a piece of bacon and one penny.[2]

7. In the pious work of relieving the indigent and infirm, there can be no doubt that the monastic orders took at least as prominent a part as the secular clergy: their vows bound them especially to a life of self-denial, and wherever their discipline was maintained in any degree of purity, the virtue of eleemosynary charity was displayed by them in a conspicuous degree. In this respect it may be safely concluded that the monks did not fall short of their profession.[3] How far they fell short in other respects, and whether the superstition which they fostered in the middle ages, did (to use the words of Mr. Hallam) "actually pass that point, when it becomes more injurious to public morals and the welfare of society, than the entire absence of all

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[1] Kemble, vol. ii. pp. 510—514., compared with vol. i. pp. 249—251.

[2] See the cases mentioned by Kemble, vol. ii. pp. 508—510.

[3] See Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. iii. p. 350

religious notions," it is not easy to determine, and the discussion of such questions is foreign to our present purpose. It seems, however, not out of place to mention briefly here some of the advantages conferred by the monastic institutions upon society during the period concerning which we write. These social benefits, without making us enamoured of a system that has too often brought forth the fruits either of hypocrisy or superstition, may serve to illustrate that scheme of compensation, by which an all-wise Providence balances the good with the evil in all earthly things, out of evil bringing forth good, and instructing and enlightening one age by the faults and follies of another. One of the chief objections to monachism is, that it substitutes an imaginary standard of moral perfection (which consists in the rigid observance of certain ascetic practices, or the constant repetition of formal acts of devotion) for that divine law, which requires men to "do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God."[1] In the early days of monachism, kings forsook their thrones, and statesmen the helm of government, that they might attain this fancied perfection, while the duties of those stations which they abandoned, were left to be performed by men of a more worldly-minded, perhaps of an irreligious, or utterly vicious, character. Such an exchange certainly could not have benefited society. One religious king and legislator, such as Alfred, probably conferred more lasting benefit on his country, in a moral and spiritual point of view, than the whole body of these enthusiasts, who fled from their duties as though they were something profane. On the other hand, it seems an unfair view of the matter to regard the greater part of the monks in this light; as it is unquestionably not true that they were all mere fanciful devotees, who sought to gratify the cravings of a morbid imagination, by a life of hardness and asceticism. They were for centuries, to a great extent, the chief labourers in the work of promoting the civilisation and religious improvement of their countrymen. The Irish monasteries were eminent schools of learning in the 7th century; and the names of Theodore, Hadrian, Biscop, Aldhelm, Bede, Alcuin, to say nothing of later worthies, will at once occur to us, as the great promoters of learning, both divine and secular, during the 7th and 8th centuries, in Saxon England. The Benedictine monks of the West of Europe were from the earliest times in a great measure free from the gross excesses of fanaticism, which had disgraced their Eastern and Egyptian predecessors. This, probably, was in part to be ascribed to that wise regulation of their founder, which enjoined the devotion of several hours of the day to manual labour. In the course of time, as the monks acquired large landed possessions, for the proper cultivation of which numerous labourers were required, the practice of manual labour was gradually abandoned, by some at least among them, for pursuits of a more intellectual kind. The first abbots of Wearmouth were men of noble birth, who not only worked diligently with their brethren in manual employment, but also did their utmost to cultivate the knowledge of the fine arts among them, and to furnish their monastery with stores of learning, by acquiring books from foreign parts.[1] Not only at Wearmouth, but at Canterbury, York, and elsewhere, libraries were collected, the fame of which was celebrated on the continent of Europe. In the catalogue of the library at York, preserved in Alcuin's writings, we find not only the works of the Fathers of the Church, both Greek and Latin, but those of several of the most celebrated of the ancient classical writers.[2] In the days before the invention of printing, the slow process by which copies of books were multiplied, was a very effectual bar to the rapid diffusion of knowledge among an uneducated people. To a certain extent, however, this evil was remedied through the labours of those members of the monastic orders, who systematically devoted themselves to the work of transcribing manuscripts. In later ages than those of which we now speak, the provision for the regular transcription of manuscripts in every great monastery formed a principal feature in the establishment. The whole process of bookmaking was carried on within the cloister,—transcribers, illuminators, and binders of books being all monks. When, therefore, we strike the balance of the evil and good conferred by the monks upon after ages, we must never forget, that their hands transcribed innumerable copies of those Holy Scriptures, which we justly prize as the depositories of our rule of faith, and in their cloisters (which often afforded the only safe retreat to the cultivators of learning in times of violence and confusion), were preserved those remains of ancient literature, the revived study of which was one of the proximate causes o the Reformation. Moreover, it was by heads of monastic establishments, that the first impulse was given in England to the noble art of building churches, in a style that has made the monuments of English ecclesiastical architecture celebrated through the world. The abbey of Wearmouth raised under the auspices of Bennet Biscop, the monasteries of Ripon and Hexham planned by the genius of Wilfrid, excited the admiration of contemporary writers; and were the first in a long series of edifices, of which the last, Westminster Abbey, was completed only a few months before the fall of the Saxon dynasty. It is true that few remains of these monuments have survived to our times, and that succeeding generations improved vastly upon the best efforts of those who had gone before; but the church-builders of Saxon England were eminent in their generation; and even bishops and abbots (as Dunstan and Ethelwold) were not ashamed to devote themselves to mechanical labour for ecclesiastical purposes, and to the application of the fine arts for the uses of religious worship. It is probable, also, that the monks were taught something of the art of healing in an age which possessed only a small share of a knowledge so essential to human happiness.[1] It was, however, in the improvement of agriculture, that the Anglo-Saxon monks showed themselves more particularly the benefactors of their countrymen. The record of Doomsday Book, which describes the state of all the lands in England immediately after the Norman conquest, shows that then the Church lands in general were in a higher state of cultivation than those in lay hands.[2] In every monastery some portion of the brotherhood gave up a great part of their time to agricultural pursuits. The lands bestowed upon these societies were frequently in a wild and uncultivated state, situated in the midst of undrained marshes and uncleared forests ; such localities being more suitable to a contemplative life, and being, on account of the want of cultivation, more easily acquired from their original possessors. The work of reclaiming these wildernesses was a task of no small magnitude and difficulty; but nothing seemed impossible to the laborious diligence of the monastic settlers. Fens were drained, forests cleared, roads opened into the very heart of the wildest solitudes ; and luxuriant meadows and abundant crops appeared in places which were but recently regarded as inaccessible to man or beast. In this manner the coast of Northumbria was brought into cultivation by the monks of Coldingham, Lindisfarne, Bamborough, Tynemouth, Jarrow, Wearmouth, Hartlepool, and Whitby ; and a fenny region extending over a space of sixty-eight miles, from Wainfleet in Lincolnshire, to the borders of Suffolk, was drained and improved by the monks of Croyland, Thorney, Ely, Ramsey, and Medeshamstede.[3]

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[1] Micah, vi. 8.

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[1] Lingard, vol. i. p. 260.

[2] Ibid. vol. ii. p. 146.

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[1] Kemble, vol. ii. p. 433.

[2] Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. iii. p. 607., quoted by Hallam in his Middle Ages, vol. iii. p. 436.

[3] Lingard, vol. i. pp. 267, 268.

The resources acquired by the monastic bodies through these improvements were liberally distributed among their countrymen in times of war, famine, or other public calamity, during which the monastery was turned into a home of refuge for those who escaped from the sword of the enemy, or afforded support to those whom the occurrence of an unfavourable harvest reduced to a state of temporary indigence.

It should also be mentioned, to the honour of the monks, that they were the great promoters of the work of missions from England and Ireland to other countries. The Irish monks, Kilian, Coloman, Tottman and others, founded monasteries at Wurtzburgh, Cologne, Ratisbon, and Vienna.[1] Egbert the monk, and his disciples, have the credit of originating those missions to Holland and Germany, which were afterwards crowned with success by the labours of the monks Willibrord and Boniface. The latter, A.D. 744, founded the magnificent abbey of Fulda in Hesse Cassel, the monks of which, after the destruction of the monasteries of England by the invasions of the Danes, maintained a reputation worthy of those from whom they derived their origin, by diffusing the light of Christianity over central Germany.[2]

Upon the whole, though we must ever regard the spirit of monachism as a spirit very different from that of pure Christianity; though we must condemn its practice in binding men by vows, as ensnaring to the conscience, and as not required by the Word of God; we feel bound to testify, that the monks were, for several ages, made the instruments in the hands of Providence for effecting great, good, and wise purposes in the education of nations. Their former utility will not indeed justify the encouragement of monastic institutions in our own day, upon any sound principles of national policy; nor could a revival of them be attended with any other effect than the increase of religious corruptions and gross superstition: but we may, nevertheless, when we look back upon the past, regard with approbation the monks of the earlier and middle ages, as in many respects important benefactors of mankind.

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[1] Lappenberg, vol. i. p. 183.

[2] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 142.

Thus we have seen that the Anglo-Saxon Church had in some important particulars a moral and civilising influence upon the rude and fierce inhabitants of the land in which it was planted. That these effects should have followed in spite of the glaring errors by which the religious system of our forefathers was defaced, is a result which need not excite our surprise. Even a corrupt form of Christianity was infinitely better than the heathen superstitions which it supplanted. That some pure gold was mixed with the mass of dross in the Church, even during the darkness of the 10th and 11th centuries, is a matter which cannot be questioned.

Nor were the beneficial effects produced by the Anglo-Saxon Church confined to those who lived under its immediate influence. We, who have the happiness of inheriting a great portion of the Church system of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, purified from the corruptions and superstitions of darker ages, have good reason to be thankful for this especial blessing, that the Providence of God caused to be set apart from ancient times, an ample provision for the teachers of Christianity in this land. It has been shown in a former chapter that the devotion of tithes and other ecclesiastical property to the maintenance of religion, and the division of the country into districts for spiritual purposes, are to be traced back as far as the 7th and 8th centuries. The parochial system and the endowment of the Church in England, are in fact some of the most ancient parts of that complex machine, which we call our constitution in Church and State. This consideration should lead us to treat with tenderness institutions which lay claim to such venerable antiquity. True it is that the Church, for the support of which the endowment was first given, did not maintain the truth undefiled, as the preceding pages show. True it is that it has, through the artifices of men, been too often made an instrument of evil, as in the course of this work has been shown, and will appear still more hereafter. But upon the whole it may be said, that, even in the darkest ages of its existence, that Church has, more or less, leavened the mass of evil, by which it was surrounded, with the good spirit of Christianity. And it is difficult to conceive how, if it had been without its temporal endowments, either religion, or learning, or the arts, could have survived the chaos of ages of rude uncontrollable barbarism. Theorists, who condemn the union of Church and State, may maintain the possibility of the purer development of Christianity, without such carnal aids; but it seems an improbable supposition that what was found necessary in times of fierce conflict of rude tribes for the mastery, will be altogether useless and cumbrous, for the Church's contest against her numerous enemies in "the perilous times of the last days."[1] Should an allwise God see fit to deprive her of these temporal advantages, He will, we may be sure, provide for the maintenance of His truth in some other way; but it is not for her own children to repudiate the benefit of an alliance with the State, so long as that union can be preserved without any sacrifice of moral principle.

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[1] Tim. iii. 1.

CHAP. XIII.

THE ANGLO-NORMAN CHURCH, FROM THE CONQUEST TO THE DEATH OF WILLIAM RUFUS.

After the decisive battle of Hastings, no effectual opposition could be made to the subjugation of England by the Conqueror, who, after some vain attempts at resistance on the part of Stigand and others, was crowned in Westminster Abbey, on the Christmas Day following, the ceremony being performed by archbishop Aldred of York. No immediate change was made in the condition of the inhabitants of the country; but in the following year a series of insurrections of the English took place in various parts, which provoked William to adopt a line of policy towards his new subjects, which was characterised by extreme sternness and relentless cruelty.

Some years of internal war and calamity ensued, but at length the contest terminated with the submission of Hereward, A.D. 1071, and from that time William's title to the country appears to have been undisputed. As it was no longer necessary for him to seek popularity with the natives, he thenceforth made it the avowed object of his government to depress them and exalt the foreigners whom he had introduced. This policy was extended even to the Church; and although no change was made in its form of government, ritual, or profession of faith, immediate steps were taken for subjecting it to the rule of Norman ecclesiastics. At a council held at Winchester, A.D. 1070, at which the king and the papal legates, Ermenfrid bishop of Sion and the cardinals

John and Peter, were present, Stigand (who had been suspended by Alexander II.) was formally deposed from the archiepiscopal see, chiefly on the ground that he had illegally held the see of Winchester with the archbishopric.[1] The person chosen by the king as Stigand's successor in the primacy, was a learned Italian of the name of Lanfranc, who had originally been a professor of laws at Pavia, and had then settled in Normandy, in which country he became prior of the monastery of Bec, and was afterwards appointed by William to the office of abbot of St. Stephen's monastery at Caen. Lanfranc was remarkable for being the first among the divines of the middle ages, who applied the precepts of logic and metaphysics to the explanation of the doctrines of Holy Scripture.[2] He at first declined the see of Canterbury, on the ground of his ignorance of the language and manners of the barbarians, as he called the English; but his scruples were overcome by the persuasions of the Pope's legate and the queen Matilda. The see of York, which had been vacated by the death of archbishop Aldred during the recent civil wars, was bestowed upon Thomas, a Norman; and Walkelin, a chaplain of the king, was made bishop of Winchester. Agelmar, bishop of Elmham, and Agelric of Selsey, and several abbots, were deprived of their dignities, apparently for no crime except that of being Englishmen. Other bishops fled from the country; and the result was, that Wulfstan, bishop of Worcester, was the only Anglo-Saxon prelate who, either from the favour of the legate Ermenfrid, or from the respect due to the sanctity of his character, was permitted to retain his see. The only Englishman who received preferment from William, was Ingulf, whom he had made his secretary during the reign of king Edward, and who was now made abbot of Croyland, of which monastery he afterwards wrote an interesting account, parts of which have been preserved to our own times.[1]

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[1] Johnson's Canons, vol. ii. p. 1.

[2] Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 350.

This policy of the Conqueror, in treating the temporalities of the Church as spoils to be distributed among his followers, did not altogether pass without rebuke, even in his own time. The monk Guitmond, a disciple of Lanfranc, refused an English bishopric offered by William, on the ground that the fortune of war could not authorise him to impose bishops upon the conquered people. The king, although not offended at the rebuke, was not to be turned aside from his purpose. The principle of excluding natives from preferment, was soon extended from the higher dignities to the inferior stations of the Church; so that the endowments founded by the piety of Anglo-Saxon or Danish kings, nobles, and prelates, were rapidly transferred to a foreign priesthood and foreign monks. This change, though prejudicial to the independence of the Church, was not without good effects, in causing the introduction of more learning among the hierarchy; and it seems unjust to speak too harshly of a policy without which England would not have had such primates as Lanfranc and Anselm. The secular property of the country underwent a similar revolution. The civil wars that had taken place during the first few years after the Conquest, had afforded an excuse for extensive confiscations of the estates of the old proprietors. The king was lavish in his grants of lands to the adventurers to whom he owed his crown; the rapacity of the nobles led them to spoil the unprotected natives; so that, partly by grant and partly by plunder, almost all the lands in the kingdom were transferred to Norman possessors. One of the chief consequences of this change was the complete introduction of the system of feudal tenures of land, which appears to have existed only in a very modified sense in Anglo-Saxon times. It would be foreign to the purpose of this work to enter into any detailed account of this system ; but it seems necessary to explain some of its leading principles, as they were from this time applied in a great measure to ecclesiastical as well as to lay property.

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[1] Lingard's History of England, vol. ii. chap. 1.; Johnson's Canons, vol. ii. p. 24 note. The authenticity of the entire work, ascribed to Ingulf, has been questioned; but parts of it are supposed to be genuine. Lappenberg, vol. i. Introduction, p. li.

The assumption on which the feudal system of tenures in England was based, as its fundamental principle, was, that all the estates in the country were originally derived from a grant of the sovereign, made in consideration of certain services to be performed by the persons to whom the grants were made. These again made grants out of the estates which they had received from the king, to other tenants, upon the condition of their performing the same or other services to themselves ; and so the practice of creating feuds might be carried on to an unlimited extent. The grantor of the estate was called the *lord* of the tenant, or *vassal*, to whom it was granted ; and the latter was bound to take an oath of fealty, or fidelity to the former, and to do him *homage*, in which ceremony (as the name imports) he professed to be the *man*, or servant, of his lord. In this way all the lands in the kingdom were held, either mediately or immediately, of the sovereign.[1] Those who held by direct grant from the crown were called tenants in chief, and the king was called the lord paramount of the inferior tenants. The tenure or condition on which the tenants in chief held their lands, was that of chivalry, or knight service, according to which each of them was bound, at the king's requisition, to furnish him with a certain number of horsemen fully armed and equipped, and to maintain them in the field for a period of forty days. Many of the inferior tenants held their lands by the same tenure, and for this purpose every considerable estate was divided into several portions called knights' fees, the tenants of which were under a similar obligation of military service to their immediate lord, although they were bound by oath not to follow him if he rebelled against the sovereign. In case of the death of the tenant without heirs, or his rebellion against his lord, the lands became forfeited and fell back into the hands of the grantor. This system was obviously of a military character, suited to a newly conquered country, and it is not easy to see how it could be properly applied to the possessions of the Church and the monasteries, which had been derived, not from recent grants, but from ancient endowments. Notwithstanding this, however, the bishops and abbots were compelled, like the barons and knights, to swear fealty and do homage to the king for their lands, and were under the same obligation as other tenants in chief, of furnishing their quota of armed horsemen for the king's service.[1]

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[1] Blackstone's Commentaries, vol. ii. p. 51.

A more important change in the civil position of the bishops was effected, by withdrawing them from sitting as administrators of justice, according to the old Anglo-Saxon custom, in the county courts. By an ordinance of the Conqueror all bishops and archdeacons were forbidden to hold pleas in the county courts according to the canon law, or to bring causes concerning the regimen of souls before the secular judicature. Every bishop was to hold a court of his own, in which he took cognisance of offences against the ecclesiastical laws, and with which no sheriff, minister of the king, or other layman, was allowed to interfere, except for the purpose of enforcing obedience to the summons of the court.[2] Thus was the first step taken in the establishment of that independent ecclesiastical jurisdiction, which was afterwards so much abused.

Although William showed no disposition to plunder the ecclesiastical revenues, or sell the appointment to bishoprics in the manner adopted by some of his successors, and even appointed a commission for the purpose of procuring the restoration of Church lands which had been unjustly seized by others, he cannot, upon the whole, be considered a great friend to the Church. According to the historian Eadmer, he only chose for prelates persons in whom it would have been dishonourable not to have been subservient to the king's will in every respect. Nothing can justify such an abuse of the high trust of ecclesiastical patronage; and yet the circumstances in which William was placed, were such as to afford to a wise statesman a plausible excuse for making every effort to keep the ecclesiastical power in complete subjection to the state. We must remember that he lived at a time when the Papal pretensions were carried by the celebrated Hildebrand, afterwards Pope Gregory VII., to a greater height than had ever yet been known. Gregory appears to have been the first of the popes, whose ambition grasped at an universal monarchy, both over national Churches and temporal princes. For the subversion of the independence of the former a weapon had been forged in the 9th century, by the publication, under the name of one Isidore, of a set of false Decretals, or supposed constitutions of the early popes, the tendency of which was to make all bishops amenable only to the tribunal of the Pope. These decrees, though now and long since admitted to be spurious, were considered in that age convenient instruments for establishing a spiritual despotism, of which Gregory was not ashamed to avail himself. Their principles had previously been carried still further by a constitution of his predecessor Alexander II., according to which no bishop was allowed to exercise his functions without the confirmation of the Holy See. Again, with respect to temporal powers, Gregory not only entirely freed the election of the popes from imperial interference, but asserted a dominion over civil rulers, which he did not scruple to enforce by excommunication, and even by releasing their subjects from their allegiance.[1]

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. chap. 1.

[2] Thorpe, vol. i. p. 495.

But this pontiff, though arrogant in the extreme towards other monarchs, was kept in check by the firmness of William. During Gregory's contest with the Emperor Henry IV., when that prince set up a rival pope against him, William, while he acknowledged Gregory himself, took occasion to make known that it was his will, that no pope should be acknowledged by his subjects, whether clerical or lay, without his previous approbation, and that no letters from the court of Rome should be circulated in his dominions until they had been first inspected by him. Again, the payment of the Peter-pence having been omitted for some years, Gregory, who considered this payment as an acknowledgment by the kings of England of the feudal superiority of the Pope, instructed his legate to require from William, not only the arrears of the money, but the performance of homage. On this occasion the Conqueror, though friendly to Gregory, showed no disposition to yield to his ambitious pretensions. He promised to give satisfaction with respect to the payment; to the demand of homage he gave a decided refusal, on the ground that it had not been paid by his predecessors or promised by himself. Moreover, with respect to the domestic administration of the Church, he would not permit any interference of the ecclesiastical power with his own prerogative; and, therefore, refused to allow the decisions of national or provincial synods to be carried into effect without his licence. On the other hand, it must be admitted that he was himself guilty of encroachment upon spiritual functions, when he forbade the excommunication or prosecution in the ecclesiastical court, of any of his tenants in chief, till he had been certified concerning the nature of the offence committed. His despotic temper was such, that in these matters he would not allow any opposition to the dictates of his individual will. In the pursuit of a favourite object, the most sacred obligations were unscrupulously violated; so that, in order to make the New Forest for the gratification of his passion for hunting, he not only laid waste the country for many miles, but destroyed the churches along with the houses of the peasantry.

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[1] Hallam, Middle Ages, vol. ii. pp. 235. 258—272.

During the papacy of Gregory VII., which lasted through a considerable part of William's reign, there were three questions which disturbed the peace of the Church in different parts of Europe. One of these, which related to the right of princes to confer investiture of ecclesiastical benefices, was mooted by Gregory at a council held at Rome, A.D. 1075, but will more properly be considered hereafter. Another was the controversy respecting the doctrine of transubstantiation, first maintained by Paschasius Radbert in the 9th century, and opposed by the celebrated John Scotus. Berengarius, a canon of Tours, had in the year 1045 maintained the opinion of John Scotus, that the bread and wine in the Holy Sacrament were only figures of the body and blood of our Saviour. This opinion was censured by different synods in France and Italy; and Berengarius was more than once compelled to retract his tenets, though he as often re-asserted them, when removed from actual danger.

Gregory, after he became Pope, determined to put an end to this controversy; and for this purpose held two synods at Rome, in the years 1078 and 1079, in each of which Berengarius was compelled to subscribe his assent to the doctrine of transubstantiation, and on the latter occasion in the strongest terms.[1] The part that Lanfranc took in the controversy, by writing a treatise expressly against Berengarius, seems to leave no room for doubt that the new Anglo-Norman prelates (unless they differed from their primate, of which there is no evidence) no longer held the doctrine which had been formerly so ably advocated by Ælfric. The third subject that excited attention at this time, was that of clerical celibacy, a practice which Gregory attempted to enforce with more vehemence than any of his predecessors. There appears to have been some ground for the reproach brought against the clergy of that age, that the vice of concubinage prevailed extensively among them. Whether this was to be checked by measures directed equally against lawful matrimony may fairly be doubted, and nothing can justify the proceedings of Gregory, in making no distinction between an union allowed by the law of God, and connections which that law distinctly condemns. But his notions of Papal supremacy were such as to make the Pope a sort of God upon earth, and therefore to raise him above the influence of ordinary moral obligations. He persevered, in spite of the opposition and tumults which were raised in Germany and Italy, and which at Milan led to a partial secession from the Church, and he finally prevailed.[1] The English Church on this occasion took a moderate course. It was ordered by a canon of a council held at Winchester in 1076, that such priests as lived in castles and villages, should not be forced to dismiss their wives, if they had them; although such as had them not, were forbidden to marry, and for the future the bishops were directed to ordain no man priest or deacon, unless he first professed that he had no wife.[2]

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[1] Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 358.; Supra, Chap. X.

The ecclesiastical legislation of Lanfranc's primacy contains but little that seems worthy of especial remark. A question being raised by the archbishop of York, as to his independence of the see of Canterbury, it was determined in a national council, with the consent of the king and the Pope, that the archbishop of York should be subject to the archbishop of Canterbury in all things relating to religion, and obey his summons to a synod; that the province of York should not extend to the south of the Humber; that the archbishop of York should go to Canterbury to consecrate the prelate elect of that see, and that the elect of York should go to Canterbury to be consecrated, and should swear obedience to the archbishop of Canterbury at his consecration.[1] At another council, held in London in 1075, it was ordained that in synods the archbishop of York should have precedence before all other bishops, except the archbishop of Canterbury, and that the bishops of London and Winchester should have precedence next to him, the rest taking rank according to the date of their consecration. In pursuance of a decree of the same synod, some of the bishops' sees were, with the consent of the king, removed from villages to cities; as, the see of Sherborne, to Salisbury; that of Selsey, to Chichester; and that of Lichfield, to Chester. The removal of the see of Dorchester to Lincoln did not take place till the next reign. It was also ordered at the same synod, that no bishop, abbot, or clergyman, should sit as judge in any cause of life or limb.[2]

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[1] Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 321.

[2] Johnson's Canons, vol. ii. p. 18.

Lanfranc not only obtained superiority over the archbishop of York, but he also consecrated two successive bishops of Dublin, and received their professions of canonical obedience.[3] He was also a great benefactor to his own diocese, and besides founding other churches, rebuilt the cathedral of Canterbury, which had been burned by the Danes, and succeeded in recovering many of the lands and manors belonging to the see, which had been appropriated by the rapacious hands of the Normans.

Notwithstanding the subjection under which William the Conqueror held the Church, it enjoyed during his lifetime a comparative degree of quiet in its possessions; but this state of repose did not continue after the accession of his son William Rufus to the throne. This prince was remarkable, not only for extreme licentiousness in his moral conduct, but for a covetousness which seemed to know no bounds. To such a character the wealth of the English Church offered irresistible temptations; and though he was restrained for a while from extreme measures, by the respect inspired by the character of Lanfranc, this obstacle was removed by the death of that prelate in 1089. From that time the king followed the counsels of an unprincipled man, Ranulph surnamed the Flambard, his justiciary and one of his chaplains, on whom he afterwards bestowed the bishopric of Durham, and who devised a novel mode of robbing the Church, by the king's taking possession, on the demise of a prelate or abbot, of the lands belonging to the vacant see or monastery. This was done on the pretence that, according to the new feudal doctrine of tenures, the revenues lapsed to the king by the death of the tenant, and might be retained until he chose to appoint a successor to the deceased incumbent. Under cover of this usurpation, for which the ancient constitutional laws of the realm afforded no grounds, the lands of the Church were let, for the benefit of the crown, to speculators who endeavoured to extort all that they could get from the impoverished tenants. The evils of such an iniquitous system may easily be conceived. The property that was originally bestowed for the purpose of promoting piety and religion, was made a curse instead of a blessing to the people, who in the want of chief pastors were left to perish for lack of knowledge. The property so acquired (after some provision had been made for the clergy and monks of the cathedral) was retained during the king's pleasure, who only surrendered it on condition of obtaining large sums of money from those whom he chose to name to the vacant dignities.[1]

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[1] Johnson's Canons, vol. ii. p. 4.; Saxon Chron. anno 1070.; Malmsbury, Kings of England, lib. iii.

[2] Ibid. vol. ii. pp. 13—15.; Malmsbury, ibid.

[3] Collier, E. H. vol. ii. p. 34.

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. chap. 2.

By this iniquitous device the possessions of the see of Canterbury were seized on Lanfranc's death, and the see was kept vacant for more than three years. At length the king, having fallen into a dangerous sickness, became troubled with remorse on account of his rapacious conduct towards the Church and his other evil deeds. It so happened that Anselm, a native of Aosta in Piedmont, abbot of the same monastery of Bec to which Lanfranc had belonged, a man of uncommon theological learning and great personal piety, was at that time staying in England. He was sent for to William at Gloucester, and by his exhortations the king was induced to make a vow of repentance and amendment, to promise the restitution of the lands which he had unjustly seized, and, in the event of his recovery, a more upright government for the future. Hitherto all attempts on the part of the nobles to induce the king to appoint a successor to Lanfranc had been vain, although he had permitted, at their especial request, that prayers should be offered up in the churches for the restoration of the archbishopric. They now seized the opportunity which offered for renewing this petition, and on this occasion they did not sue in vain, as Anselm was at once named by William to fill the vacant see. The object of the king's choice was, however, most unwilling to accept the dignity thrust upon him. The entreaties and arguments of the bishops were insufficient to overcome his extreme reluctance to place himself in a condition of constant collision with such a character as William, which he compared to the yoking to the same plough of a weak old sheep together with a wild ox. Nevertheless the pastoral staff, the emblem of episcopal dignity, was forced into his hand in the king's chamber, and a Te Deum was sung in commemoration of the event. Still Anselm protested against the election as invalid, on account of his being a subject of the duke of Normandy (the king's brother) and under a vow of canonical obedience to the archbishop of

Rouen, without whose consent he could not take a foreign bishopric. The consent of those persons was easily obtained, and the archbishop of Rouen added a command that Anselm should accept the office. At length his reluctance was finally overcome, and after a delay of some months, at an assembly of the nobles, he did homage to the king for the temporalities of his see, not, however, without obtaining from William a promise that he would restore all the lands of the see which had been possessed by Lanfranc, and follow Anselm's direction in all matters relating to religion. The event showed how little reliance could be placed on these promises. The king had previously recovered from his illness, and had soon relapsed into his old ways of iniquity and licentiousness. And now the persons to whom the archiepiscopal lands had been alienated, were encouraged to keep possession, and to Anselm's remonstrances vague and unsatisfactory answers were returned.

The enthronement of the archbishop in his cathedral church, which took place in September, 1093, amidst the general rejoicings of the clergy and people, was attended with a disagreeable incident, which was a sort of presage of the troubles that were coming. Ranulph, the Flambard, met Anselm on his way to the cathedral, with a summons commanding him to answer in the king's court for some imputed breach of the royal prerogative. This circumstance, however ominous, interposed no real obstacle in the way of his consecration. That event took place in Advent in the same year, and was attended by all the bishops of England, except Wulfstan of Worcester and Osbern of Exeter, who were prevented by illness from being present. In the instrument of election read on the occasion, the church of Canterbury was styled the metropolitan church of all Britain, as, indeed, it had been in the days of Theodore. This was objected to by Thomas archbishop of York, as interfering with the metropolitan rights of his own church; and, in consequence of this objection, Anselm was consecrated as the Primate of all Britain. His trials began almost immediately afterwards.

The feudal law required that the heir of a deceased tenant should pay what was called a relief to the lord, on his succession to the inheritance of his ancestor. When the feudal principle was applied to the lands of the Church, it seemed to follow by analogy, that a bishop, or other ecclesiastical tenant, must pay a similar fine, though it was called a gift, for taking possession of his predecessor's estates. Anselm was told that he must comply with this custom; and, in the hope that his obedience would induce the king to act liberally towards the Church, he offered a donation of 500 pounds of silver. At first the king was disposed to accept this sum; but, when it was suggested to him that the archbishop ought to offer double the amount, he refused it, under the hope that he should thus obtain more. In this, however, he was mistaken. Anselm remonstrated with the king on his refusal, and was met with the insulting remark that he might keep his money to himself. He had the consolation of reflecting that it could not be said that he had bought his bishopric; nevertheless, he again offered the money privately to the king, and, upon his second refusal, distributed it in alms to the poor, for the benefit of William's soul.

The next cause of offence also touched the king in his most sensitive part—his pecuniary interest. Anselm having vainly urged him to permit the assembling of an ecclesiastical synod, for the purpose of adopting measures against incestuous marriages and other corruptions of morals, ventured to press another subject upon his notice—the evil resulting from the vacancy of numerous abbeys, the lands of which were retained in the king's hands. William replied that the abbeys were his property, and that he should do what he would with his own. Anselm rejoined that, though in one sense the abbeys belonged to him, yet in another sense they were God's, intended to support his servants, and not to furnish men and money for the king's wars. The king expressed his high displeasure at such language; and Anselm, finding that his remonstrances were vain, withdrew from the royal presence. On further reflection he was grieved at having given offence to William, and sought the good offices of the other bishops to make his peace. They intimated to him that the only way to propitiate the king was by a gift of money; but on this point Anselm positively refused compliance. He would not offer again what had been twice refused, nor would he insult his sovereign by seeking to purchase his favour with money, as a horse or an ass. Soon after this another, and, as it turned out, a more serious, cause of quarrel arose. The Papal chair, after the death of Gregory VII., which took place A.D. 1085, was disputed by rival competitors, a circumstance of frequent occurrence in those times. After the short pontificate of Victor III., Urban II. was elected Pope, at Terracina, in 1088, in opposition to the emperor of Germany's Pontiff, who had assumed the name of Clement III.[1] Anselm had, previously to his consecration, when he announced to William the terms on which he was willing to accept the archbishopric, declared that he must be permitted to acknowledge Urban as Pope. The circumstances attending his dispute with the king had convinced him of the necessity of obtaining the aid of the Pope in the struggle which he saw was impending. His Italian birth and education, and the prevailing ecclesiastical spirit of the age, led him conscientiously to believe that, in order to draw down the blessing of Heaven upon his government of the English Church, he must act in subordination to one whom he regarded as the spiritual head of Christendom, and that without such obedience he could not lawfully exercise the functions of an archbishop. In Anselm's situation such a preference was natural, and even an English ecclesiastic in his position might have been pardoned for preferring the refined despotism of the Papacy to the brutal tyranny of a sacrilegious and Godless sovereign, such as Rufus.

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[1] Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 331.

When he announced to William his intention of proceeding to Rome to obtain his pall from the Pope, he was asked which Pope he meant. "Urban II." was the answer. "I have not yet acknowledged him," replied the king, "and you know that neither I nor my father have allowed any one to acknowledge a Pope whom we have not received." Anselm reminded him of what had passed between them previously to his consecration, when he declared that he could only accept the archbishopric on the understanding that he should acknowledge Urban as Pope. The king, on the other hand, protested that Anselm's support of this Pope against his will, was a breach of his oath of allegiance, and an attack upon the crown. At Anselm's request, a council was summoned to meet at Rockingham in Lent, 1095, to consider the question, whether obedience to the Pope was incompatible with fidelity to the king. On this occasion Anselm reminded the bishops who were present, of the promise of support which they had made to him on his elevation to the archiepiscopal see; which promise he now called upon them to fulfil, by giving him their counsel under the painful circumstances in which he was placed, when it was impossible for him to keep his fidelity to the king without renouncing his obedience to the Pope, or to remain faithful to the Pope, without violating his fidelity to the king. The bishops replied that they had no counsel to give, but they wished that he should submit unconditionally to the king. On the following day, he repeated his request and received the same answer. Anselm then, appealing in the most solemn manner to the Chief Shepherd and Ruler of all, declared his determination to obey the representative of St. Peter, in everything relating to God, and in everything which on the worldly side of right belonged to the king, to offer him faithful counsel and support, according to the best of his knowledge and conscience. This announcement was received with loud murmurs by the assembly; and all refusing to deliver this answer to the king, Anselm was obliged to deliver it in person. A long consultation ensued between William and the bishops and nobles, during which Anselm remained in the church, and leaning his head against the wall, fell asleep. At length the bishops and some of the nobles returned to him, and requested that he would reconsider the matter, urging him to renounce Urban, and make his submission to the king. This renunciation Anselm positively refused to make; whereupon, after a vain attempt to have the council adjourned to the morrow, he was informed by the bishop of Durham, "a man more distinguished (says the contemporary biographer of Anselm) for readiness of tongue than a sound understanding," that the king would proceed against him for high treason if he did not renounce the Pope. Anselm replied by challenging the bishops to prove that his obedience to the Pope was inconsistent with his fidelity to the king. This answer confounded his adversaries; and it now for the first time occurred to them that, according to the existing state of the law, the archbishop of Canterbury, being not amenable to the jurisdiction of the king's courts, and being the highest ecclesiastical person in the realm, could only be tried by the Pope. They then returned to the king, with whom they continued in anxious consultation till night. Anselm being left alone in the church, was comforted in his solitude by the zeal and faithfulness of a common soldier, who embracing his knees bade him be of good heart, "whatever he was obliged to bear; and think of Job, who sat in the ashes, and yet was prepared for the devil, and thus avenged Adam, who had submitted to him in Paradise."

The next day the bishop of Durham advised the king to deprive Anselm of his ring and crosier, and banish him from the kingdom. The king would probably have followed this counsel, but the temporal peers refused their assent to the proposal. He then required the bishops to renounce their obedience to Anselm as Primate, and to their great disgrace, all, with one or two exceptions, obeyed this unjustifiable mandate, and the abbots who were present imitated their servile conduct. The king proceeded to desire the temporal peers to follow the example of the prelates by renouncing the primate; but, to his great mortification, they refused to comply with the request. He then asked the different prelates separately, in what sense they had renounced Anselm, whether unconditionally, or solely with reference to what he had said on the authority of the Pope. Those who said that their renunciation was unconditional, he called his true supporters and gave them seats of honour near him; the others he called traitors, and removed them into a corner of the house, to await the publication of their sentence, from which state of disgrace they could only be delivered by the payment of heavy sums of money.

After this William was induced to offer to Anselm what was called a truce, until Whitsuntide, which, however, was no period of rest to him from persecution. Some of his most faithful adherents were banished or imprisoned by the king's command. The king retained possession of the lands of the see, and the tenants were oppressed with more grievous exactions than ever.

Previously to this William had despatched two of his chaplains to Rome, with instructions to find out who was the canonically elected Pope, and to persuade him to send a pall to the king for the archbishop of Canterbury. Anselm was not named in the request, the king's intention being, in case of that prelate's deposition (which he hoped to obtain at the adjourned council), to bestow the pall on whomsoever he pleased to appoint to the archbishopric. Urban was induced by the promises made in William's name, to send the bishop of Albano back with the pall, in company with the king's messengers. The Papal envoy played his part so successfully as to induce the king to publish an edict acknowledging Urban as Pope. When, however, William went on to propose the deposition of Anselm, the legate declared that such a measure was impossible; and the king, finding himself overreached, determined next to try, through the mediation of the other bishops, what terms he could make with Anselm. But to all their proposals, either to purchase a reconciliation with money, or to make some gift in consideration of his receiving the pall without being put to the expense of going to Rome for it, the archbishop returned a decided refusal. The issue of this extraordinary, and to the king most disgraceful, contest was that he was obliged to act upon the advice of his peers, and be reconciled to Anselm without any conditions. The archbishop would not receive the pall from his hands; and at last, to put an end to all further discussion, it was agreed that the legate should place it on the high altar of the cathedral at Canterbury, and that Anselm should take it thence, as "from the hand of St. Peter."

The restoration of peace between Anselm and the king was followed by the submission of his suffragans who had so basely renounced their primate in the day of his adversity. Not long afterwards the sees of Hereford and Worcester fell vacant; the vacancies were immediately filled up by the king, and the new bishops consecrated by Anselm. The king also recalled the friends of Anselm whom he had banished, and the archbishop was for some time permitted to discharge his high functions without molestation. It appears that, like his predecessor Lanfranc, he was acknowledged as metropolitan of the Irish bishops. Not only did the bishop of Dublin come to Anselm for consecration, but his consent was obtained to the erection of a new see at Waterford, the bishop of which was also consecrated by him; and both these bishops made a profession of canonical obedience to him.[1]

As long as Anselm was unmolested by the king, he appears to have been anxious to show his zeal in William's behalf, as far as he conscientiously could do so. In the year 1096, when the king wished to advance a sum of money to his brother the duke of Normandy, to enable him to embark in the first Crusade, Anselm came forward readily to assist him, and even went so far as to apply to William's use, with the consent of his chapter, some funds belonging to the cathedral of Canterbury, for the repayment of which he pledged part of the rents of the archiepiscopal see.

Notwithstanding this act of liberality, the peace between them did not continue long. In the following year William made an expedition against the rebellious Welsh, at the conclusion of which Anselm, instead of receiving permission (which he had long hoped for) to assemble a synod for the reformation of morals, was summoned to appear before the king's court, on a charge of having sent his quota of men for the royal army on this occasion, insufficiently supplied with arms and provisions. Well might the archbishop apply to himself the words of the prophet; "We looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!"[2] He resolved not to appear before the court, but to take this opportunity of withdrawing from the kingdom and seeking refuge at Rome. Before the charge was brought on for hearing, he surprised the king by an application made through some of the peers, for permission to go to Rome. The request, though refused, was again and again repeated, and when urged for the third time, led to a lengthened discussion, in the course of which some of the bishops endeavoured to reason Anselm out of his project. He explained his motives, and they commended his piety, but professed for their part to be too much entangled with the love of earthly things to be able to follow him or detach themselves from the king. "Then go to the king," said Anselm, "I will abide in God." He was then required by William either to take an oath that he would never on any occasion apply to the Pope, or to leave the country with all haste. Anselm's answer was given with dignity and in the king's presence, and was to the effect that he could not pledge himself to any thing that was contrary to right and to the will of God. To take an oath that he would never apply to the Papal see, was to deny that see, and this in his opinion amounted to a denial of Christ, who, as he believed, had founded that see. The king seeing that he was firmly resolved to go, at length gave the required permission, with the qualification that he was not to take any property with him, but such articles as were required for his journey. Anselm retired from the royal presence, but before long returned as though he had forgotten something, and requested permission to bestow his blessing upon the king as his spiritual son. The king was astonished at the request, but made no objection, and so they parted to meet no more. Soon afterwards, Anselm set out in the guise of a pilgrim, with scrip and staff, for Dover, whence he embarked for the Continent, not however before he had submitted to the insult of having his baggage searched by a messenger of the king, on the pretence that he was carrying off treasures. On his departure, the archbishopric was once more put under confiscation and the tenants subjected to the old exactions.

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[1] Collier, vol. ii. pp. 81. 86.

[2] Jer. xiv. 19.

Anselm having arrived at Rome after a perilous journey, was received with the greatest honour by the Pope, who refused to hear of his resignation of the archbishopric. A quiet retreat was assigned to him for a residence near the monastery of Telesi, in Campania, where he devoted himself to study and writing, and found time to complete his great work on the Incarnation. Urban II. also invited his attendance at a council summoned to meet at Bari, to check the error of the Greek divines, who denied the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son as well as the Father. At this council, which met in October, A.D. 1098, Anselm, who was one of the most learned men of his age, argued the question with so much power and eloquence as to obtain the applause of all. Having settled this doctrinal point and rejected the tenet of the Greeks, the council were invited to consider the state of the Church in England, and the causes of the dispute between the king and Anselm. They would have proceeded, at the suggestion of the Pope, to pronounce a sentence of excommunication against William; but at the earnest entreaty of Anselm, who fell at the Pope's feet, the sentence did not issue. The council were struck with admiration at the Christian demeanour of the archbishop, and nothing further was done beyond the renewal of the general denunciation of former councils against the practice of the investiture of ecclesiastical benefices being conferred by laymen.

A letter which Urban had written to William in Anselm's favour, produced no effect beyond the sending of a fruitless mission to Rome, and the breach seemed as incurable as ever. The Pope, in his interview with the king's envoy, at first threatened to excommunicate William, unless he restored Anselm immediately; but the envoy made such use of his time during his stay at the Papal court, as to procure by gifts and promises a postponement of the final decision of the case till the following Michaelmas. Anselm now prepared to depart in despair of obtaining justice, but was persuaded to remain till after Easter for the meeting of another council, and in the mean time received from the Pope every mark of deference and respect. At this second synod, which met in April, A.D. 1099, nothing decisive was done in support of Anselm's cause: the assembly for the most part confined its proceedings to resolutions against simony, clerical immorality, and lay patronage. Urban, however, took the opportunity of republishing the anathema against laymen who presumed to grant investitures, and clergymen who either received lay investiture or ordained those who had done so, or who took oaths of fealty to laymen in respect of ecclesiastical benefices. After this Anselm returned to Lyons, where he remained till he heard of the death of William, which took place suddenly in 1100, as he was hunting in the New Forest; a piece of news which affected the archbishop deeply. A way was now opened for his return to England; the new king, Henry I., requested him to return as soon as possible, since he wished to entrust himself and the people of England entirely to Anselm's counsel. Upon this he hastened forward on his journey, and landed at Dover on the 23rd of September 1100, amidst the joyful acclamations of the people.[1]

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[1] See Professor Hasse's Life of Anselm, translated by Turner, passim.

CHAP. XIV.

ANGLO-NORMAN CHURCH DURING THE REIGN OF HENRY I.

THE principle of hereditary succession to the crown of England was in the 11th and 12th centuries still unsettled; so that Henry, a brave, energetic, and unscrupulous prince, being on the spot at the time of Rufus's death, had no difficulty in securing the throne in preference to his eldest brother Robert. Nevertheless, as he might be considered by some in the light of an usurper, it seemed desirable that he should strengthen his position and make his claims popular by ample concessions to his subjects. Hence one of his first acts was to publish a charter of liberties, which professed to restore the laws of Edward the Confessor, as amended by William the Conqueror, and to abolish some of the more odious appendages of the feudal system, and the gross corruptions and oppressions which had been introduced during the reign of Rufus. Among other benefits conferred by this charter, the king restored to the Church its ancient immunities, and promised that he would neither sell nor let to farm the vacant bishoprics or abbeys, nor retain them in his own possession, nor raise taxes from the tenants of the lands.[1] It was in pursuance of this liberal policy, that the king had hastened to recall Anselm. Nevertheless, the return of the archbishop was only the prelude to a new struggle between the powers of Church and State, arising out of the question of lay investitures, which so long disturbed the peace of Europe, especially in Italy and Germany. The ancient custom of electing bishops by the united suffrages of the clergy and people, however laudable in theory, had been found, after the lapse of centuries, inconvenient in practice. The Roman emperors, in some instances, asserted the right of absolute nomination; and upon the breaking up of the Western empire, the appointment of bishops was generally, with some limitations, vested in the sovereigns of the different kingdoms which were formed out of its fragments.[1] The endowment of the episcopal sees and monasteries with extensive landed possessions seemed, according to the analogy of the conveyance of lay property, to require some outward form of investiture, by which the bishop or abbot should be inducted into the possession of the estates belonging to his benefice. In the course of time it became customary for the sovereigns to bestow the investiture of these higher dignities by the delivery of a ring and a staff, the symbols of spiritual power. In the pontificate of Gregory VII. this custom had led to such abuse as to stir up the ambitious zeal of that Pope to labour for its abolition. Simony prevailed to so great an extent, that (as we are told) there was hardly anything pertaining to the Church, from bishoprics to the lower offices, which was not put upon sale.[2] And to justify this enormity, it was asserted, by way of palliation, that it was not the blessing of the grace of the Holy Spirit which was the object of sale, but the temporal possessions of the bishopric or other benefice. Gregory began with attacking the abuse of the sale of benefices; but finding that the emperor of Germany would not allow a council to be assembled for the purpose of trying those who were guilty of this offence, he proceeded to far greater lengths, and attacked the system of lay investiture as the root of the other evil. At a council held at Rome in 1075, he pronounced a sentence of excommunication, not only against those who were tainted with the corrupt practice of simony, but against all laymen who should confer any bishopric or abbey, and all clergymen who should receive investiture from the hands of a layman. This decree caused the most violent commotions in Italy and Germany. Henry IV., king of the Romans, assembled a synod of bishops at Worms, who passed a sentence of deposition against Gregory; and the Pope, in his turn, presumed to interdict Henry from exercising his regal functions, and pretended to absolve his subjects from their allegiance. A revolt of part of Henry's German dominions compelled him to make submission to the Pope; and the haughty pontiff, who claimed to be the successor of the fisherman of Galilee, was guilty of the extraordinary outrage of keeping the sovereign of a great empire waiting for three days in the depth of winter, in the garb of a penitent and fasting, at the castle of Canossa, in Italy, before he would give him absolution. All this humiliation, however, was unavailing, and did not prevent a fierce and sanguinary war, in the course of which Henry established a rival Pope at Rome, under the name of Clement III., by whom he was crowned emperor of Germany. Gregory died in 1085; and his successors, Victor III. and Urban II., renewed at different councils the decrees against lay investiture; and Urban went so far as to denounce the practice of spiritual persons taking oaths of fealty to their sovereigns or other lords, in respect of their ecclesiastical benefices.[1]

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[1] Thorpe, vol. i. p. 498

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[1] Bingham, lib. iv. cap. ii. § 19.

[2] Soames's Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 321. note.

We have seen that, at the two councils held under Urban at which Anselm was present, the prohibitions against lay investiture were solemnly renewed, and Anselm felt himself under a conscientious obligation to carry the decrees of those councils into effect as far as lay in his power. How far he was justified in so doing is a question that will be differently determined by men, according to the light in which they view the relation between Church and State. Those who think that the spiritual power ought to be entirely independent of the temporal, regard Anselm as a hero worthy of all honour; to those who think that the Church ought to be altogether in subjection to the State, he appears an ambitious and presumptuous priest. Without adopting either of these extreme views, we may observe that, while the practice of lay investiture was open to grave and serious objection, because it bestowed what were considered the symbols of spiritual power, the principle asserted in the prohibitions published at the council at Rome, which anathematized the clergy who did homage to laymen for their benefices, was an intolerable encroachment on the just prerogative of the State. Their tendency was to make a richly endowed clergy, who were possessed of great powers and privileges, entirely independent of the civil rulers ; a position as opposed to the precepts of Christianity as it is utterly inconsistent with good government. We may be thankful that our Norman princes, little as they are entitled to our respect for their moral qualities, had the courage and wisdom to resist successfully this extravagant pretension. That it was not considered in such a light by the meek and self-denying Anselm may be accounted for by the fact, that the simoniacal practices which prevailed in that age, and the harsh and unjust conduct to the clergy of such sovereigns as Rufus, raised insuperable prejudices in the minds of the most pious ecclesiastics against every species of lay patronage of benefices, as an utterly accursed thing. In addition to this, it is unquestionable, as the dispute between Anselm and Rufus, as well as Anselm's controversy with Henry about investitures, abundantly testify, that the practical effect of the system of uncontrolled lay patronage, as shown in the ecclesiastical appointments made by these kings, was to place over the Church worldly-minded courtiers and sycophants, instead of spiritual pastors of the flock of Christ. Under these circumstances, we may believe that Anselm acted from the purest motives, though we cannot approve of his conduct in this respect, that in his first interview with Henry, he refused to take the oath of allegiance to him, and sheltered himself under the plea of the resolutions of the two Italian councils. It does not appear that in making this refusal he intended to deny the duty of allegiance to his prince; but he thought that the moral obligation, which was implied in his spiritual office, ought to suffice, without the restriction of an oath which might fetter his course of action, in case of his obedience to an earthly master proving at any time inconsistent with his duty to God. Moreover, he declared plainly that he must make the acknowledgment of the resolutions of the Italian councils the condition of his resumption of the archiepiscopal functions, and hold no communication with the king in case of his exercising the right of investiture, or with those who were appointed by him. This announcement was highly displeasing, not only to the king and his nobles, but to the other bishops also, who declared their readiness to consent to the extreme measures of banishing Anselm a second time from the kingdom, and of renouncing the Papal authority, rather than give way to his notions on the subject of investiture. But this policy did not suit the king, who had great need of Anselm's support in the circumstances in which he was placed; and therefore he proposed that the discussion of the matter should be deferred for the present, until an embassy had been sent to Rome, to induce, if possible, the Pope to change the resolutions of those councils, in consideration of the ancient custom of the country.

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[1] Mosheim, vol. ii. pp. 323—332.

In the interval Anselm was reinstated in possession of the property and privileges of the church of Canterbury, and was enabled to assist Henry in a matter of great delicacy and importance. The king had formed a resolution highly agreeable to his Anglo-Saxon subjects, to contract a matrimonial union with Matilda, daughter of the king of Scotland, and a lineal descendant of the Anglo-Saxon king, Edmund Iron-side. There was, however, a canonical impediment, which seemed to stand in the way of the marriage, arising from the fact that Matilda had been brought up in the convent of Wilton, and had been seen to wear the veil. The question was referred to Anselm, whether the princess was in such a sense devoted by her parents to the service of God, that she could not lawfully be united to an earthly husband. It appeared on further inquiry, that the veil had only been put upon her by her aunt, to protect her from the insults of the Norman soldiery, and a synod of bishops, abbots, and nobles, which Anselm summoned for the purpose of considering the matter, pronounced her free from the obligation of any monastic vows. This being the case, the archbishop had no hesitation in solemnising her marriage with the king, and crowning her as queen at Westminster, after he had publicly called on all persons who had any objections to make to the marriage, to come forward and declare them.

Another service that Anselm was enabled to perform for Henry showed, that his scruples about taking the oath of allegiance did not affect his fidelity to his sovereign. When Robert the king's brother was preparing to invade England, Anselm, who was almost the only person on whom Henry could rely, was able by his eloquence to persuade the Norman barons to remain faithful to him in his hour of distress. Henry in return made large promises of submission to the authority of the Church and obedience to the Apostolic see. But the danger was soon past, Robert relinquished his claims upon the English throne for money, and the king's promises were found to be of little worth. The ambassador returned from Rome, with the Pope's refusal to allow the king the right of investiture. Henry cared little for this, as he had made up his mind to surrender nothing; and since it was not likely that Anselm would give way after the Pope's decision was known, the king resolved to try and force him by threats into submission. He was accordingly summoned to court, and told that he must either take the oath of allegiance, and bind himself by a promise to consecrate the abbots and bishops nominated by the king, or quit the kingdom. Anselm remonstrated, and appealed to the decrees of the Italian councils; Henry, on the other hand, declared that he would not give up the rights of his ancestors, or allow anybody to remain in the kingdom who was not his feodary; and he was supported in his resolution by the nobles and the other bishops. A total rupture with the king, or a second exile, seemed inevitable for Anselm. However, the crisis passed away, and the king so far relented as to agree to a second embassy to Rome, for the purpose of inducing the Pope to rescind his resolution. On his part three bishops were sent to treat with the Pope — Gerhard elect of York, Herbert of Thetford (or Norwich), and Robert of Chester (or Lichfield); but this embassy led to no more successful results than the former. The Pope's written reply was to the same effect as before, although the ambassadors declared that he had privately held to them language of a tenour contrary to that of the written document. On this point they were flatly contradicted by Anselm's messengers, and a great altercation ensued; but neither party would give way. At last the king's council resolved that another appeal should be made to the Pope, for an explanation of his meaning; that the king should exercise the right of investiture in the mean time; but that Anselm should not be obliged to consecrate the prelates so invested until the Pope's mind was known, although he was not to deprive either them or the king who invested them, of the privilege of Church communion.

The king, in accordance with this resolution, proceeded to invest two of his chaplains, each of the name of Roger, with the bishoprics of Salisbury and Hereford. The person nominated to Hereford died soon afterwards, and the king invested one Reinhelm in his stead; and, in defiance of the resolution of the council, he required Anselm to consecrate Reinhelm and Roger of Salisbury, and one William, who had been nominated to Winchester, two years before. To the consecration of William Anselm entertained no objection, as he not only had refused to receive his crosier from the king, but had received it from the archbishop himself, having been first approved by the people and clergy of Winchester. But when he was told that no one of the bishops elect might receive consecration without the others, he positively refused to perform the ceremony. Gerhard, archbishop of York, was then required to consecrate these prelates; but Reinhelm and William chose to give up their bishoprics rather than be consecrated by him; whereupon one was banished from the court, and the other from the country.

In the spring of 1103, Anselm's messengers returned from Rome, with a letter from Paschal, in which he indignantly denied the statement made by the three bishops, which imputed to him the charge of giving them a verbal answer at variance with his former letter. And now the king being as unwilling to give up the point in dispute as the Pope, Anselm's position became critical and by no means free from danger. For the restoration of peace it was proposed, that Anselm himself should a second time go to Rome; and the primate, finding that it was the general wish of the prelates and barons that he should take this journey, agreed, notwithstanding his advanced age and infirmities, to accede to their request.

It was late in the year 1103 when Anselm reached Rome where William of Warelwast, (who had been the king's envoy on the former occasions) had been for some time awaiting his arrival. The ambassador brought a rich contribution of Peter-pence and a letter from the king, in which he declared plainly that he would not suffer the rights and privileges of the crown of England to be diminished. A day being appointed for the hearing of both parties, they found that the dispute was as far from a settlement as ever.

William of Warelwast was so bold as to tell the Pope that Henry would not be deprived of the right of investiture, even if it cost him his kingdom; and Paschal, on the other hand, exclaimed with equal firmness, that he would never surrender that right, even if it cost him his head. The result of the conference was, that the Pope made no concession of importance. The sentence of excommunication was to remain in force against all prelates and abbots who had received investiture from the king, or might yet receive it; and the utmost that the ambassador could obtain, was that Henry should be permitted to enjoy a few unimportant rights exercised by his father, and also that the Pope's refusal should be expressed in civil terms of expostulation and remonstrance. The Pope's answer, however, produced no further effect upon the king, than that he proceeded at once to seize the property of the archiepiscopal see and devote its income to his treasury.

After this, some further negotiations took place between Henry and Anselm by letter, but without effect; and even the queen Matilda, who entertained the greatest reverence for the archbishop, tried to overcome his scruples, and wrote in the strongest terms to exhort him to give up his opposition to the king's will, and return to England. The monks of Canterbury, and Gondulf bishop of Rochester (who was, in respect of his see, a feudal vassal of the archbishop of Canterbury), also entreated him not to desert his flock, and described the melancholy state of the Church in consequence of his protracted absence. But against all these remonstrances Anselm alleged the impossibility (after the decision of the Pope) of his holding communion with those who either had received lay investiture or who supported the practice; and declared that the principle for which he contended, was of far more importance than the objectors supposed, inasmuch as the abuse of investiture by the king led to its abuse by private patrons, who appointed worthless priests to churches, without the sanction of the bishops.

At length, after Henry had made the experiment of another fruitless embassy to Rome, the Pope was induced to promulgate a sentence of excommunication against all his advisers, who had confirmed him in his usurpation of the right of investiture.

This, however, did not satisfy Anselm; who, finding that he could gain nothing more from the Pope, resolved, with the concurrence of his friend the archbishop of Lyons, to excommunicate the king by his own authority. He accordingly left Lyons for Rheims, in order that he might take the decisive step in the neighbourhood of Normandy where the king then was. Anselm's intention became known to Henry before it was carried into execution; and as the king's policy at that time made him incline to concession, by the advice of his nobles he sought an interview with the primate, which took place in July, 1105.

On this occasion he proposed to give up the actual investiture of the spiritual office; but insisted on two things, which Anselm was unwilling to concede without further advice: first, that the archbishop should take the oath of allegiance to him; and secondly, that he should acknowledge the validity of the investitures already made by the king, and hold communion with the persons invested, and also with those whom they had ordained.

These points having been, after some delay, referred to the Pope, Paschal directed Anselm to concede them both; and so at length this tedious controversy was brought to a happy termination.

In August, 1106, a solemn conference took place between the contending parties at Bec, in which Henry renounced his claim to investiture, and Anselm agreed to take the oath of allegiance. Anselm further obtained from the king a promise, that the Church should be exempt from such arbitrary contributions as he had lately imposed, by levying fines on the married clergy for their breach of the canons, and other exactions; and also that he would not, in the absence or upon the death of any prelate, appropriate the income of the see to his own use. Henry also agreed to make compensation both to the clergy and to the archbishop, for the losses already sustained by them in consequence of his exactions.

Soon afterwards Anselm returned to England, where he was received with much honour, the queen herself joining in the processions which were formed to meet him in various places on his journey. The consent of the peers and bishops to the settlement of the controversy was obtained in the ensuing year, and then the vacant sees were filled up in the following manner. The king interrogated the primate and the assembled orders of the kingdom, concerning the persons chosen by him, then designated them as elected, and received from them the oath of allegiance; after which they were sent to Canterbury to be consecrated and invested by Anselm. The new prelates were the three already mentioned — William of Winchester, Roger of Salisbury, and Reinhelm,—and also William of Warelwast, the king's ambassador to the Pope, and a certain Urban, bishop elect of Glamorgan, or Llandaff.

Anselm, in his account of this matter to the Pope, stated that the king no longer followed his own inclinations in the nomination of the persons to be consecrated bishops, but entrusted himself to the counsel of the pious; from which we may infer, that he contented himself with a simple recommendation, or a simple consent to an appointment. Thus much, at all events, was gained by the spiritual power in the contest, that as investiture was conferred by a spiritual and not by a temporal person, the right of confirmation in the episcopal office was expressly conceded to the clergy. Anselm himself had an opportunity afterwards of showing that a real advantage had been gained, inasmuch as he refused investiture of an abbey to a person nominated by the queen, on the ground of his having offered the archbishop a bribe.[1] Upon the whole we may say that the rival powers found a conciliatory adjustment, by an agreement to render unto Cæsar the things which were Cæsar's, and to reserve for the ministers of God the things which seemed more properly to belong to them; and thus security was provided against the uncontrolled licence of patronage which, in such hands as those of some of the princes of that age, was an abuse of the greatest magnitude. A similar adjustment was afterwards carried into effect between the Pope and the Emperor, in the Concordat of Worms, in 1122; and thus an end was put to a contest which had given rise to so much misery and bloodshed, and desolated some of the fairest countries of Europe with wars waged in the name of the reputed Vicar of the Prince of Peace.[2]

The effects of the settlement of this controversy were felt in England, by the happy influence which Anselm was enabled to exercise over the king, in procuring the redress of some popular grievances, and particularly in alleviating the evils produced by the royal claim of purveyance. In those days, wherever the court moved, its presence was made a pretext for levying contributions on the inhabitants of the district, and was also the occasion of much insult and injury to their families from the royal retainers. Through Anselm's interference this abuse was checked, and the offenders were severely punished. The king, on his part, not only allowed Anselm full liberty in maintaining the independence of his ecclesiastical government, but on one occasion showed him an especial mark of confidence, by nominating him regent of the kingdom during his own absence in Normandy, and entrusting him with the guardianship of his children.[3]

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[1] Collier, vol. ii. p. 132.

[2] Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 419.

[3] Hasse's Life of Anselm.

Before we take leave of Anselm we must mention that, as a theologian, he not only went far beyond the writers of his age, but produced works which had a lasting effect upon the theology of after ages. His treatise on the Incarnation gives reasons for the necessity to fallen man of an atonement by an Almighty Saviour, which have been adopted by modern writers of eminence; and it has been observed that the argument of the celebrated philosopher Des Cartes, for the existence of a Deity, deduced from the idea of an infinitely perfect Being, is to be found in the works of Anselm.[1]

Amodern church historian, Dr. Milner, gives some extracts from Anselm's works, to show that, "like Augustine, whom he seems to have followed as his model, he abounds both in profound argumentation on the most abstruse and difficult subjects, and in devout and fervent meditations on practical godliness;" and the same writer observes, that Anselm "found the Gospel of Christ to be the power of God unto salvation; and amidst the gloom of superstition with which he was surrounded, was yet enabled to describe and vindicate every fundamental of evangelical doctrine."[2]

The investiture controversy occupies so large a portion of the ecclesiastical history of this reign, as to leave little room for notice of other matters; nevertheless, it will be necessary to add a few observations upon some important points, before we conclude this Chapter.

1. The right of the Pope to send legates into England for the purpose of exercising a visitatorial power over the Church, was the subject of some warm discussion during Henry's reign. In this respect Anselm, though a zealous supporter of the Papal authority, maintained faithfully the independence of the national Church. Without questioning

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[1] Mosheim, vol. ii. pp. 350—352.; Hallam's Middle Ages, vol iii. p. 533.
[2] Milner's Church History, chap. v. cent. xi.

the right of the Pope to send legates for the purpose of determining special cases which were admitted to be within his jurisdiction, he regarded the appointment of ambassadors, who were to act as Papal vicars for the general supervision of the ecclesiastical affairs of a country, as an encroachment on the rights of metropolitans, which ought to be resisted. Accordingly, when the legate who brought him his pall from Urban II., took upon himself to question Anselm's catholicity, and to give him directions how he was to act as archbishop, Anselm remonstrated mildly, but firmly, against this impertinent intrusion. On the occasion of his visit to Rome in his first exile, he represented to the Pope, that the office of Papal legate in England ought to be entrusted to none but the archbishop of Canterbury. Urban II. appeared to be satisfied that Anselm was in the right upon this point. Nevertheless, in 1100, his successor Paschal sent Guido archbishop of Guienne as his legate to England, who, however, does not appear to have been acknowledged by anybody in that capacity, or to have discharged any legatine functions. Upon Anselm's remonstrance against this proceeding, he received a promise of a personal exemption from such visits for the future; and in 1103, during his second exile, he obtained a bull confirming the primacy and other privileges of the church of Canterbury to his successors. In 1116, the controversy was revived under archbishop Ralph, Anselm's successor, who made a journey to Rome in person, to maintain the rights of his see, but returned without obtaining any final decision of the question.

In 1120, the cardinal Peter arrived in England, with the title of legate of the Apostolic see in the Gauls, in Britain, in Ireland, and in the Orkneys. Henry received him with honour; but told him plainly that he would never surrender the rights of his crown; and that, even if he wished it, he could not do so without the consent of his prelates and barons. Peter departed without effecting anything, and was succeeded by John of Crema, who, after a long negotiation, was permitted to proceed, and held synods both in Scotland and at Westminster, at which place several canons were enacted for enforcing the celibacy of the clergy and other matters of discipline. On Crema's return to Rome, he was accompanied by William of Corboyl, archbishop of Canterbury; who, to prevent such intrusions in future, obtained for himself from Pope Honorius II., a special grant of the legatine authority both in England and Scotland. This grant was confirmed by Innocent II. in 1130, but it appears to have been only personal, as we find in 1138, during the troublous reign of Henry's successor Stephen, when the see of Canterbury was vacant, Alberic bishop of Ostia, holding a synod at Westminster as the Pope's legate, for the regulation of discipline. Not long afterwards, Henry bishop of Winchester, brother to King Stephen, was invested with the dignity of legate by Innocent II., and in that capacity held synods, as the superior of the archbishop of Canterbury.[1]

2. Not only in the refusal to receive Papal legates, but also in the resistance to other encroachments from Rome, some evidence was afforded, during this reign, that the independence of the national Church was not yet destroyed.

Up to the beginning of the 12th century, with some exceptions, no attempt had been made by the Popes to interfere with the appointment of bishops, beyond the confirmation of metropolitans by the gift of the pall. Paschal II., however, took upon himself to put forth some pretensions of the kind, with reference to the appointment of a successor to Anselm. After the death of that prelate in 1109, the see of Canterbury was kept vacant five years, and the king returned to the vicious practice of his brother Rufus, of seizing the temporalities during the vacancy. Ralph bishop of Rochester

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[1] Hasse's Life of Anselm; Lingard, H. E., vol. ii. p. 140.; Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 42. 46.

(who, in consequence of the peculiar relation in which the see of Rochester stood to that of Canterbury, had been appointed to his office by Anselm) performed the spiritual functions of the archiepiscopal diocese during the same time. At length, the king, at the solicitation of the Pope and the monks of Canterbury, convened a meeting of the bishops and temporal peers, at which the monks of Canterbury were directed to attend, and at which Ralph was chosen to be primate. The Pope took occasion on the application for the pall for Ralph, to rebuke the monks of Canterbury for not first acquainting him, before they proceeded to an election. Not content with this, he wrote to the king and the bishops of England in the same strain, to complain that he was not consulted about the appointment and translation of bishops, and that they held councils of their own authority; and in support of his argument he did not scruple to quote the false Decretals. Henry, after consulting his own bishops, sent the bishop of Exeter as his ambassador to expostulate with Paschal; and it does not appear that on this occasion any advantage was gained by the latter, beyond the assertion of a claim which might afterwards be used as a precedent for his successors.[1]

3. With respect to the internal government of the Church during the reigns of Rufus and Henry, we may observe that Anselm, while he took care to maintain the independence of his metropolitan see against foreign encroachments, was equally zealous in supporting its rights against other bishops at home. He asserted successfully against his suffragans the right of the archbishop of Canterbury to perform in person every episcopal act that might be required upon the lands belonging to his see, even where they were situated in another diocese. He also refused to perform the ceremony of the consecration of bishops or abbots, anywhere but in churches

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[1] Collier, vol. ii. pp. 158—166.

or chapels belonging to the see of Canterbury. Moreover, Anselm in every such consecration insisted on a profession of obedience being made to the metropolitan; a practice which was of the greatest importance, but which, from the state of disorder occasioned by the conduct of Rufus towards the Church, had nearly been discontinued. In this matter, however, Rufus for once took the side of ecclesiastical order, and supported Anselm against his suffragans. The most serious opposition that he encountered in respect of the profession of canonical obedience, was from the archbishop of York. Lanfranc, we have seen, succeeded, after much difficulty, in obtaining this acknowledgment of the supremacy of Canterbury, from Thomas of York. Notwithstanding this, Thomas's two successors, Gerhard and another Thomas, each objected to take the oath of obedience to Anselm. In Gerhard's case, the dispute was compromised; but the second Thomas took advantage of Anselm's declining health and infirmities, and contrived to put off his consecration till after the primate's death. Anselm, however, had during his lifetime laid such strict injunctions upon all the bishops not to consecrate Thomas so long as he persevered in his resistance, that, notwithstanding his death, the elect of York was obliged to give way; and finally, the king took the matter up, and decreed that Thomas must either make the profession of obedience to the Church of Canterbury, or resign.[1]

Notwithstanding this decision, the question was again raised during Henry's reign by Thurstan, who was appointed to succeed Thomas. Having refused to be consecrated by the archbishop of Canterbury, he afterwards persuaded the Pope, Calixtus II., to take his part, and obtained consecration from him, at a synod at Rheims. In consequence of this, he was obliged to remain in exile from his country for some years. At length, through the intervention of the Pope, he was permitted to return to England, on condition that he should not officiate anywhere as archbishop out of his own diocese, until he had made the usual submission to the Church of Canterbury. This, however, to the end of his life, he constantly refused to do.[1]

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[1] Hasse's Life of Anselm.

The supremacy of the metropolitan see of Canterbury was not confined, as we have already in part seen, within the limits of England, inasmuch as both Lanfranc and Anselm exercised metropolitan jurisdiction in Ireland, by consecrating bishops for that country. Anselm, however, was nearly the last of the archbishops of Canterbury who exercised such jurisdiction, inasmuch as the Popes not many years afterwards granted palls to the Irish archbishops.[2] In Scotland also, and the Orkneys, Anselm was regarded as primate, and exerted his influence for the propagation of Christianity in those northern regions.

The Church of Wales had up to this time been an independent Church, between which and the sister Church of England an interchange of friendly offices occasionally took place; so that not long before the Conquest, we read of a bishop of St. David's acting as coadjutor to a bishop of Hereford, when incapacitated by age and infirmity. But Henry, having conquered the country, carried the exercise of sovereignty so far as to nominate the bishops and subject them to the see of Canterbury, instead of that of St. David's.[3]

Anselm's synod at Westminster, in 1102, was attended by Hervey bishop of Bangor, who afterwards received from the king the custody of the abbey of Ely, which with the consent of the bishop of Lincoln, the archbishop of Canterbury, the Pope, and the king, was converted into a bishop's see. About the same time the bishop's see, which had been moved from Lichfield to Chester in the reign of the Conqueror, was once more removed to Coventry; and towards the close of Henry's reign, the see of Carlisle was founded for the counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland, with the concurrence of the archbishop of York, the Pope, and the king.[1]

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[1] Collier, vol. ii. pp. 168. 187.

[2] Townsend's Eccles. Hist., vol. ii. p. 398.; Wordsworth's Sermons on the Irish Church, pp. 90. 96.

[3] Saxon Chron. 1055.; Lingard, H. E., vol. ii. p. 146. note.

4. One of the chief objects which Anselm had in view after the accession of Henry, was one which he had vainly tried to attain under Rufus; the restoration of ecclesiastical synods, as a means of reviving discipline among the clergy and monks and reforming the morals of the people. Having obtained the king's consent, he assembled at Westminster, in 1102, a synod of bishops, abbots, and lay-peers, the presence of the last being deemed necessary for the ratification of the canons enacted. The gross immorality and licentiousness that prevailed among the laity, seemed to require the most severe measures; but the synod chiefly directed its attention to two offences against ecclesiastical discipline, which strict Churchmen of that day regarded with equal horror; viz. simony, and the marriage of the clergy. The former certainly prevailed to a disgraceful extent, so that the highest benefices were openly bought and sold in the most shameless manner. Three abbots, who were already consecrated, and three more who had not yet received consecration, were deposed by the synod for having purchased their offices, and three others for other offences. Canons were passed by which the letting of archdeaconries to farm, as well as the purchase of churches or prebends, was strictly forbidden; and it was declared that no clergyman should be bailiff, procurator, or judge in cases of blood. The laws against clerical marriages were rendered more

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[1] Johnson's Canons, vol. ii. p. 25.; Collier, vol. ii. pp. 133. 170. 208.

stringent by enactments, that no person should be ordained even to the inferior office of subdeacon without a profession of celibacy; and that no married priest should be accounted a lawful priest, or read mass, or be listened to if he did read. It was further provided, that no sons of priests should be heirs to their father's churches. The synod also attacked two evils of some importance; the spoliation of tithes by the temporal lords, and the impropriation of them by monastic bodies, — a practice which appears to have begun at this early period, and which afterwards led to such important consequences in the English Church. The monks were not permitted to accept impropriations of churches without the bishop's consent, nor so to rob those which were given them, of their revenues, that the priests should be in want of necessaries. The enactments against clerical marriages were carried still farther at another synod of Anselm, in 1108; and the penalties of deprivation of their office and benefice, and loss of goods, were denounced against the transgressors of these unjustifiable canons. Similar provisions against clerical marriages and simony were passed at a synod held under the Pope's legate, John of Crema, at Westminster, in 1126, and also at another synod held by Ralph's successor in the see of Canterbury, William of Corboyl, in the following year. The former of these synods also put a check upon the abuse of patronage by a layman, by enacting that no monk or clergyman should accept any church, tithes, or ecclesiastical benefice, from lay hands, without the consent of the bishop.[1]

5. Much as the monastic system was patronised by the Anglo-Saxons, the period which followed the Norman conquest was even more favourable to the growth of monastic institutions than that which went before. It was the policy of Gregory VII. to attach the monks as much as possible to

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[1] Johnson's Canons, vol. ii. pp. 24—41.

the Roman see; and from this cause the number of exemptions of monasteries by Papal authority, from episcopal control, was greatly increased after his time, so as to become in the 12th century an almost intolerable evil.[1] During the 11th century new orders were established, which however, were only ramifications of the great Benedictine family. The most celebrated of these were the order of monks of Clugny in France, and that of Cistercians, or monks of Citeaux, in Burgundy, of which the famous St. Bernard was a member, and which was introduced into England at Waverley Abbey early in the 12th century. Those who esteemed the rule of Benedict too lax, founded other new orders upon a more severe system; of which the most celebrated was that of the Carthusians, or monks of the Chartreuse. The canons also during the same period reformed their discipline after the pattern of the monks, taking the regulations of St. Augustine for their rule. These regular canons of St. Augustine were introduced into England in Henry I.'s reign; and upon the first establishment of the bishopric of Carlisle, the chapter of the cathedral of that see consisted entirely of canons of this order.[2]

But the most remarkable form in which the monastic spirit displayed itself at this period, was in the foundation of the military orders of the Knights Templars, and Knights Hospitallers or Knights of St. John. These orders took their origin, at the beginning of the 12th century, at Jerusalem, in which city the victors of the first Crusade had established a Christian kingdom, and whither the prevailing fanaticism during two centuries led the most ardent spirits of the various nations of Europe, for the romantic purpose of preserving Palestine from the infidels. The Templars were an entirely military order; but they adopted the rule of Benedict as far as possible, with respect to their religious services and diet, and they undertook to defend the Christian religion by arms, to guard the highways of Palestine, and to protect the pilgrims from the violence of the Mohammedans. This order soon spread over Europe, and became no less remarkable for its wealth, and the vices of its members, than for their prowess in arms; but at the end of two centuries so great was the popular odium against them, that the order was suppressed by a Papal bull, in 1311. Their possessions in England were given to the Knights Hospitallers, a less odious body, whose functions were only in part military, as they were divided into three classes, consisting of knights, of priests, and of serving brethren. This order derived its name from the hospital of Jerusalem, in which the first members exercised the duty of taking care of the sick poor· and both it, and a third order, that of the Teutonic Knights (which was founded at the end of the 12th century) originally made the care of the poor, sick, and wounded pilgrims a principal part of their office.[1]

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[1] Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 332.

[2] Ibid., vol. ii. pp. 337—340.; Collier, vol. ii. pp. 209, 210.

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[1] Mosheim, vol. ii. pp. 401—403.

CHAP. XV.

THE ANGLO-NORMAN CHURCH FROM THE DEATH OF HENRY I. TO THE COUNCIL OF NORTHAMPTON.

Henry I. had in his lifetime obtained from his nobles and clergy the acknowledgment of his only surviving child Matilda, or Maud, the widow of Henry IV. emperor of Germany, as his successor. This precaution, however, did not prevent the accession of his nephew, Stephen count of Boulogne, who, although he had himself sworn allegiance to Matilda, did not scruple to seize the vacant throne, and endeavour to prop up an unrighteous cause by the support of the clergy. He produced a letter from the Pope in his favour; a matter of no small importance in times when the Papal authority was a rival of the Imperial power, and was by rapid strides advancing itself above the kings of the earth. He also made large promises to the clergy, and granted additional liberties to the Church; and it has been observed, that his coronation oath seems to include a recognition of that immunity of the clergy from the secular arm which afterwards led to such commotions.[1] The flames of civil war were soon kindled in the land: the king of Scotland, who was uncle to the empress, took up arms in support of her title, and in repeated invasions of the Northern counties of England caused such havoc and devastation as to provoke the determined opposition of all classes against him. Thurstan, the aged archbishop of York, took the lead in exhorting the Northern barons to fight for their families, their country, and their God; and the clergy were directed to give their aid by bringing their parishioners to join the host of the defenders. Before the army, so collected near Northallerton, a cross was erected upon a waggon in the field, from which the battle that ensued was called "the Battle of the Standard;" and the bishop of the Orkneys pronounced a solemn absolution in the archbishop's name, for those who fell in so sacred a cause. On this occasion the military propensities of the clergy were turned to a good account, by contributing to the preservation of the country. On the other hand, the circumstance of the bishops possessing castles strongly fortified, gave umbrage to Stephen, and provoked him to quarrel with the clergy, in consequence of which he imprisoned the bishops of Salisbury, Ely, and Lincoln. The cause of these prelates was espoused by Henry bishop of Winchester, the king's brother, who was also the Pope's legate; who called a council to consider the matter, before which he summoned the king to justify his conduct. At this synod Theobald, who had lately been made archbishop of Canterbury, was present, and several other bishops, and also one Alberic de Vere, as counsel for the king; but the legate presided by virtue of the Papal commission, which he produced. The king did not (as he might reasonably have done) refuse to appear before his own subjects; but on the other hand sought to justify himself, by showing that the accused prelates had been guilty of offences against the canons of the Church, as well as of disaffection towards the crown. The synod, however, was dissolved without effecting any reconciliation between the contending parties, and Stephen was not ashamed to appeal from its decision to the authority of the Pope.[1]

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[1] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 314.

Soon after this the Empress Matilda landed in England, and a bloody civil war ensued, which lasted for many years with varied success, each party in its turn being either elated with victory or suffering the extreme reverses of fortune. A period so full of calamity and distress does not offer to our notice many events of interest, connected with the history of the Church. The clergy, acting under the guidance of Henry the legate, alternately supported each competitor, although archbishop Theobald, and most of the prelates, refused to recognise the empress as queen, until they had been released from their allegiance to Stephen. The extreme wretchedness of the country may be partly conceived from the fact, that a synod held in Winchester by the legate, in 1143, found it necessary to enact, that whosoever violated a church or churchyard, or laid violent hands on a clerk or religious person, should not be absolved by any except the Pope; and that the plough and husbandman in the fields should enjoy the same peace as if they were in the churchyard.[1]

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 163—170.

At length, in 1147, Matilda retiring to Normandy, Stephen acquired the upper hand; but by his imprudence he contrived, first to alienate some of the principal barons from his party, and afterwards to provoke a second quarrel with the clergy. At the instigation of his brother Henry, who, through the influence of archbishop Theobald, had been deprived of his legatine authority by the Pope, the king forbade the archbishop to attend a council held by Pope Eugenius III., at Rheims. For despising this prohibition Theobald was banished from the kingdom. In defiance of the royal authority, he returned and landed on the coast of Norfolk, and compelled Stephen to submission, by publishing an interdict against him, which suspended the celebration of all divine offices in every place where the king's authority extended.[2] Happily for the nation this disastrous civil contest was brought to an end in 1152, and an arrangement was concluded through the mediation of archbishop

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[1] Johnson, vol. ii. p. 46.

[2] Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 170—182.

Theobald and Henry of Winchester, by which the succession was secured to Matilda's son Henry. Afterwards, at Stephen's death, in 1154, this young prince was acknowledged without dispute as the lawful successor to the throne, and was crowned at Westminster by the archbishop of Canterbury, in December in the same year.

The extreme youth of Henry, (who was not more than twenty years of age at the time of his accession,) as well as the great power which he possessed as king of England and lord of a great part of France, seemed to render it especially desirable that he should be guided by the wisdom of some able, trustworthy, and religious counsellor, who might keep him from the rash and tyrannical policy which his predecessors had adopted with respect to the Church. These considerations may have influenced archbishop Theobald in recommending to the notice of the king the celebrated Thomas Becket, then archdeacon of Canterbury, whose history occupies so large a portion of the ecclesiastical records of this reign.

Becket was of English extraction, being the son of a respectable and wealthy citizen of London, who once filled the office of sheriff of that city; he was brought up in the monastery of the canons of Merton, studied in his youth at Paris, and at an early age was introduced into the household of archbishop Theobald, in which Roger de Pont l'Eveque, afterwards archbishop of York, was also at the same time an inmate. As long as he remained with the archbishop, Becket gave himself up to the study of the civil and canon law; and for the improvement of his education in this department, he was permitted to pass a year at the colleges of Bologna and Auxerre; moreover, when Theobald was called to Rome on some affair of moment, Becket accompanied him, and made himself useful to the primate by his knowledge and industry in the despatch of business. His talents and favour with the archbishop excited the jealousy of Roger, by whose artifices he was twice expelled for a season from the archiepiscopal mansion. Such was the favourable opinion entertained of Becket by Theobald, that he was more than once sent by the primate on a special mission to the Papal court, and in reward for his services he obtained, though as yet only in deacon's orders, several preferments in the Church. He received a prebend in St. Paul's cathedral, and another in the cathedral of Lincoln; and on the elevation of Roger to the archbishopric of York, he obtained the dignities which that prelate had held, viz. the provostship of Beverley, and the archdeaconry of Canterbury, which last preferment was then of the annual value of 100*l*., and entitled its possessor to rank next to the bishops and abbots.

Becket having been favourably mentioned to the king, not only by archbishop Theobald, but also by Henry bishop of Winchester, was soon advanced to the second place in the kingdom after royalty, by being appointed chancellor. That officer had not at that time any authority strictly judicial; he was keeper of the king's seal, had to sign all royal grants, had the care of the royal chapel, and the custody of all vacant bishoprics, abbeys, and baronies, and had a right to attend the king's council without a summons. The office was generally, if not always, held by an ecclesiastic, and was considered as a certain step to a bishopric. In addition to this honour, Becket received the secular dignities of the wardenship of the Tower of London, the custody of the castle of Berkhamstead, and of that of Eye. with the services of 140 knights.

The new chancellor conducted himself in his office, rather as a magnificent secular noble, than as a minister of the Church of Christ. The splendour of his equipage, the munificence of his table, the generosity with which he dispensed his riches among all classes, made him a general favourite. He possessed unbounded influence over the king, who treated him with the easy familiarity of a boon companion. At the same time his ability as a minister was acknowledged by the most difficult negotiations being entrusted to his skill; and he not only raised and maintained at his own expense, for Henry's military expeditions, a considerable body of knights and other horsemen, but showed that in personal prowess he was not inferior to the bravest of the Norman barons.

While Becket was thus playing the part of a successful negotiator and warrior, the life of archbishop Theobald was drawing to a close; and his death, in 1161, left the primacy of the English Church vacant. The favour which the chancellor enjoyed with the king, had long since pointed him out to some of the courtiers as the probable successor of the archbishop; but Becket replied to such suggestions, that he knew three poor priests in England, any one of whom he had rather see promoted to the archbishopric than himself. Henry was in Normandy at the time when he heard of Theobald's death; but, whatever his intentions were, he kept them to himself for a while, and in the mean time the revenues of the archiepiscopal see were paid into the exchequer, and the custody of the lands devolved upon the chancellor. At length the king announced to Becket his intention of sending him to England upon business of importance; and just as he was about to depart, he communicated to him the intelligence that one of the objects of his mission was that he might be made archbishop of Canterbury. Becket who had guessed what was going to happen, though he had concealed his suspicions from the king, received the announcement with a smile, and pointed to his dress as not very suitable to the occupant of so holy a see, expressing at the same time his conviction, from his knowledge of Henry's temper and disposition towards the Church, that the appointment would tend to convert the friendship that existed between them into bitter enmity. The king, however, was not to be turned aside from his purpose; and the Pope's legate, Henry of Pisa, adding his persuasions to overcome Becket's reluctance, he was at length induced to accept the honour. The office, however, was not at that time absolutely in the gift of the crown, although the wishes of the king must necessarily have had great weight in the disposal of it; and, on account of the secular character of Becket's previous life, it seemed desirable on this occasion that every ecclesiastical form should be strictly observed, in order to prevent any troubles from arising afterwards, in case of the appointment being objected to by the clergy. Under these circumstances, the king despatched to England two bishops, together with a confidential agent of his own, Richard de Lucy, to confer with the chapter of Canterbury upon the election of an archbishop. The royal messengers, while they professed that the king wished to give the chapter a free choice, took care to represent strongly the benefit that would accrue to the Church if they elected a person acceptable to Henry and able to have influence over his mind for good. The result was that the monks, after some hesitation, occasioned by the fact of Becket not being a monk (as nearly all the former archbishops had been[1]), unanimously chose him to fill the vacant archiepiscopal see. After this all the bishops, and abbots, and several lay peers and royal officers, were summoned to a council in London, at which the young prince Henry attended as his father's representative. The election of Becket being announced to this synod, was ratified by the consent of all present. The only exception to the unanimity of the council was afforded by Gilbert Foliot, bishop of Hereford and afterwards of London, a man of learning and severe morals, who was supposed to have looked for the appointment himself, but who prudently abstained from maintaining a fruitless opposition to the general feeling of the assembly. Henry of Winchester then, in the name of the other bishops, petitioned the young prince that Becket might be delivered up to the Church, free from all secular obligations, duties, and responsibilities; which request was immediately granted. A day was appointed for the new archbishop's consecration at Canterbury; and having on the previous day been ordained priest, he was consecrated to the episcopal office by Henry of Winchester, in the presence of the young prince and fourteen bishops of the province of Canterbury.[1]

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[1] "Cum usque ad illa tempora fere semper ecclesia Cantuarensis viros vita et habitu religiosos habuerit pontifices." Roger de Pontigny, Life of Becket.

Becket being now formally invested with the episcopal character, not only resigned the office of chancellor, but at the same time, to the astonishment of all, laid aside the habits and pursuits of a layman, and devoted himself to a strict, severe, and, to all outward appearance, holy life. His conduct in this respect has been attributed by some to hypocrisy; but there seems to be no ground for questioning the fact, that the change of his position wrought in him an earnest and conscientious feeling of responsibility, which led to a total change of life. If in his altered state there was an excess of rigour, which seems to us unnatural, we must make allowances for the notions which prevailed in those times, when the fashionable asceticism enjoined much that savours to us of gross superstition. Becket's biographers dilate at length on the outward acts by which this change was marked. His diet was spare and coarse; he wore a hair garment, full of vermin, next to his skin; he frequently submitted his naked back to the discipline of the lash. Instead of being surrounded by a gay company of knights, he had his household composed of a few reverend and sober clergymen and monks. The munificence which had formerly distinguished him was retained; but displayed itself in the support of charitable institutions, the encouragement of men of learning, and the most liberal alms to the poor. He doubled the charitable offerings of his predecessor, and washed daily the feet of thirteen poor men. He was most diligent in prayer and in preaching, patient and honest in the administration of justice, and in the performance of all his episcopal duties irreproachable.

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[1] Lives of Becket by Roger de Pontigny, Grim, Herbert de Boseham, and Fitz-Stephen, edited by Dr. Giles.

The change in the archbishop's mode of life was soon made known to the king, and misrepresented by the flatterers who surrounded him. Some time, however, elapsed before Henry showed any outward signs of coldness towards his favourite. In the second year of his consecration Becket and some of his suffragans, with the full assent of the king, attended a council held by Pope Alexander III. at Tours, and on his return to England he was received by Henry with his wonted kindness. But this state of things was not destined to continue much longer. Henry was disappointed at finding that the man whom he had selected for the primacy on account of his personal devotion to himself, was so given up to the duties of his office as to withdraw himself from his attendance on the court. Perhaps he began to suspect that he had only made choice of another Anselm; a supposition for which Becket's conduct, in proposing at the council of Tours the canonisation of that prelate, afforded some grounds. If such were Henry's thoughts, he contrived to dissemble them for a time, until circumstances forced him into collision with the archbishop. Unhappily there was no want, either of subjects which might provoke such a collision, or of persons who were disposed to make mischief between the king and the primate. Becket's zeal for the purity of the Church had excited the fears of certain courtly ecclesiastics who profited by its abuses, as his determination to recover lands, illegally alienated from the archiepiscopal see, had provoked the opposition of the barons. In addition to this, it is said by some that on one occasion, openly before the king's face, he refused to sanction his appropriation to his own purposes of the customary payment of two shillings a hide made to the sheriff of each county for the defence of the kingdom.[1] He excommunicated William of Eynesford, one of the king's tenants in chief, who disputed his right to bestow a living upon a clerk of the name of Laurence. The king commanded the archbishop to absolve William, on the ground that he had no right to excommunicate a tenant in chief without consulting him. This Becket at first refused to do, alleging that the act of absolution, as well as that of excommunication, was a function purely spiritual; but afterwards, in order to pacify the king, he complied with his wish and remitted the sentence. The question, however, which brought matters to a crisis between Henry and the archbishop, was a dispute about the right of the clergy to be tried exclusively in the ecclesiastical courts upon any criminal charges.

This claim, which in the 12th century was carried to such an extravagant height, derived its first origin from the laws of the early Christian emperors, which gave a legal sanction to the arbitrative jurisdiction which the religious customs of the primitive Christians assigned to their bishops. For the exercise of such a jurisdiction in matters of a temporal nature, originally the consent of both parties was required; but a law of Justinian allowed, as a particular privilege of the clergy of Constantinople, that pecuniary claims against them should, in the first instance, be brought before the bishop; and that if he could not decide them, recourse might be had to the civil tribunals.[2] The same lawgiver reserved the cognisance of criminal offences committed by the clergy, to the civil magistrate, with the provision that no sentence should be executed against a clerk without the consent of the bishop, or the final decision of the emperor. He also exempted the episcopal order from secular jurisdiction altogether. In later times Charlemagne, whose policy led him to favour the exclusive privileges of the clergy, not only permitted the jurisdiction of the bishops to embrace all civil causes which either party chose to refer to it, even where proceedings had already commenced in the secular court, but also gave to the whole body of the clergy an absolute exemption in criminal charges, from the judicial authority of the magistrate.[1]

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[1] Roger de Pontigny. This seems to have been the tax called Danegild.

[2] Bingham, lib. v. cap. ii. § 13.

This clerical exemption from the criminal jurisdiction of the state seems to have been unknown to the ancient Anglo-Saxon constitution. The bishop, as we have seen, exercised the important functions of a civil judge in the same court with the ealdorman; and though he claimed the right of punishing the offences of the clergy according to the canons of the Church, this did not imply a denial of the jurisdiction of the magistrate over crimes committed by the same body against the laws of the state. Thus archbishop Egbert admits that, where ecclesiastical persons commit homicide, fornication, or theft among laymen, they should be seized by the seculars against whom they had offended, unless the Church were pleased to make satisfaction for them. Again, a law of Alfred directed that a priest who committed homicide, should be secularised, and then delivered up to the ordinary tribunals. Similar laws of Ethelred and Cnut commanded that for the same crime a priest should be secularised, become an outlaw, and do such penance as the Pope should prescribe. Another law of Edward the Elder enacted that, if a man in orders were guilty of theft, fighting, perjury, or fornication, he should be subject to the same penalties as the laity would be under the same circumstances, and to his canonical penance besides.[2]

So matters stood until the reign of the Conqueror, who separated the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical from that of the civil judges, by forbidding the bishops and archdeacons to hold pleas according to the ecclesiastical law, in the county court, and erecting separate tribunals before which such causes were in future to be brought. This measure was probably intended to gratify the foreign clergy whom William had introduced into the country; but the wisdom of it can hardly be denied by those who wish to keep the clergy free from secular engagements. Nevertheless, it led by natural consequences to a state of things that in Henry II.'s reign became almost intolerable. By degrees the sphere of jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts was enlarged, so as to comprehend, under the name of spiritual causes, various questions of a civil or temporal nature. Such were matters of contract, breaches of trust, causes matrimonial, the execution of testaments, the punishment of perjury, sacrilege, usury, incest, adultery, with none of which the secular magistrate was permitted to interfere. The Church courts, indeed, could not inflict directly any severer punishment than excommunication; but then the sentence of excommunication could be enforced by the temporal court, by imprisonment or sequestration of effects. The code which regulated the decisions of these courts, was derived from the canons of ancient councils and the decrees of Popes, from which a digest of canon law was compiled about A.D. 1140, by Gratian, a monk of Bologna. The study of this code became an important branch of education; lectures upon it were read at Oxford, by one Vacarius, as early as the reign of Stephen; and there soon arose a new set of legal practitioners, the canonists as they were afterwards called; who, deriving their learning from foreign universities, were probably far superior in intellectual cultivation to the justiciaries of the royal and baronial courts.[1]

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[1] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. pp. 210—214.

[2] Thorpe, vol. i. pp. 76. 169. 346. 400.; vol. ii. p. 90.

While the ecclesiastical courts were thus rising into a degree of importance, which naturally excited the jealousy of the civil power, the clergy had in the mean time secured for themselves imperceptibly, together with this extensive jurisdiction, an absolute exemption from the authority of the state in criminal matters. This exemption was acknowledged generally in the middle of the 12th century, and not long afterwards was sanctioned by Papal authority under Innocent III.; and it became a maxim of the canon law, that an ecclesiastic could not be condemned by a secular judge, notwithstanding national usages or laws to the contrary.[1] This amounted to something like a declaration of impunity for the worst crimes when committed by clerks, inasmuch as the ecclesiastical courts could not inflict the severest punishment of the law, and were charged with remissness in inflicting even such punishments as lay within their power. The evil was enormously increased, in consequence of the great number of persons who were permitted to claim the privilege of this exemption. Not only all who had received the N B clerical tonsure, but all orphans and widows, the stranger and the poor, the pilgrim and the leper, as well as Crusaders, and even all who had made a vow to join a Crusade, were considered so far within the protection of the Church as to enjoy the same immunity.[2]

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[1] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. pp. 310—312.; Lingard, vol. ii. p. 210.; Blackstone's Commentaries, vol. i. p. 18.

At the same time, such was the lawless state of the clerical body in England during this reign, that crimes of the deepest dye were daily perpetrated by men in holy orders. It has been stated that when the contest between Henry and Becket began, it was found that no less than 100 murders had been committed since his accession, by ecclesiastics.[3] After making every allowance for exaggeration, we cannot doubt that the circumstances of the kingdom were such, as to require some legislative check to the immunities of the clergy. It became the imperative duty of the sovereign, to try to put some limits to a privilege the effect of which was that a considerable portion of his subjects (including some of the first men in rank, education, and influence) were not liable to the same punishment for crime as the rest of their countrymen. Whatever we may think of Henry's proceedings in the course of that contest, there ought to be no question among sober-minded men, that the cause which he maintained against Becket in the first instance, was that of order against anarchy, that of law and justice against the usurpations of an intolerable tyranny.

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[1] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 313. note. [2] Ibid. 309.

[3] William of Newburgh. It should be remembered, however, that all who had received the tonsure were included among the clergy.

It must be admitted, however, that one of the first cases which provoked the king's wrath against the ecclesiastical courts, was one in which the judges erred, rather by an excess of severity towards the person accused, than the contrary. A canon of Bedford, named Philip de Brois, had in the time of archbishop Theobald been tried in the ecclesiastical court for a homicide, and been condemned to make the pecuniary compensation usual in such cases. Some time afterwards, Fitz-Peter, the king's itinerant justiciary, reproached him publicly on account of this matter, and was assailed by De Brois in his turn with opprobrious language. For this insult, the king demanded that De Brois should be prosecuted before the ecclesiastical court; and upon his confessing the offence, he was sentenced to forfeit the income of his prebend to the king for two years, and to be publicly whipped.

Severe as this sentence was, Henry was not satisfied, and swore in his rage that the bishops who had tried De Brois, had spared him, because he was a clergyman. In another instance, however, he had better grounds for complaint. A clerk in the diocese of Worcester was accused of having seduced a gentleman's daughter and murdered the father. The king very properly required that the culprit should be delivered up to the secular court for judgment; the archbishop, on the other hand, resisted, and caused him to be kept in custody by the bishop of Worcester, that he might not be delivered to the king's officers. These, and other cases, in which the encroachments of the clergy upon the prerogatives of the crown were strongly felt, provoked the king at length to take the decisive step of summoning the prelates together, to remonstrate with them upon the rapacity of the archdeacons, who made a gain of men's sins, and the abuses arising from the clerical exemption from secular jurisdiction.

He demanded the consent of the bishops to a law, that clerks convicted of crimes, either on proof or on their own confession, should be instantly degraded and delivered to the officers of the king's court for corporal punishment. The other bishops were willing to agree to this; but Becket taking them aside, argued that such a proceeding would be unjust and contrary both to the canons of the Church and to the law of God, inasmuch as it would amount to a double punishment for the same offence. On this occasion he persuaded them to refuse the king's request. Upon this Henry turned to another subject, and demanded of the assembled bishops whether they were willing in all things to observe the customs of the realm. Becket replied cautiously, that he would observe them, "saving his order." The same question being put to each of the prelates separately, they all made the same answer, with the exception of Hilary of Chichester, who promised unqualified obedience.

The king vainly endeavoured to persuade the archbishop and the other prelates to omit the qualification. Becket replied that they had sworn fealty to him and allegiance with this qualification, according to the ordinary form of the oath taken by the bishops, and also by the inferior clergy, and positively refused to make any engagement without the proviso. The day was spent in vain discussions and altercations, till at length the king in a rage quitted the chamber where the prelates were assembled. The next day he left

London at an early hour, having first demanded back from Becket the castles and other temporal honours which he held of the crown.

The example of Hilary of Chichester was soon followed by Roger of York and Gilbert Foliot, who was now bishop of London, both of whom hastened to make their peace with the king by the omission of the obnoxious qualification. At length, the primate also gave way, and promised, simply and without reserve, to observe the customs of the kingdom. He was moved to make this submission, partly by the entreaty of his friends, and partly by the instigation of an envoy who brought letters which he professed to have received from Pope Alexander III. and some of his cardinals, expressing a wish that Becket should comply with the king's wishes. The envoy added an assurance that the king had declared that he would require nothing of the primate but what was consistent with the privileges of his order.

Henry was somewhat appeased by this unexpected submission; but required that the archbishop's assent to the customs should be testified by some formal instrument, and in public in the presence of the bishops and nobles of the realm. For this purpose a great council was summoned to meet at Clarendon, a royal palace not far from Salisbury.

At this assembly, Becket repenting deeply of his former promise, sought by all means to avoid committing himself to a course which, as he thought, endangered to the utmost the liberty of the Church. Every effort was made to subdue his obstinacy, but for a long time without effect. The bishops of Salisbury and Norwich, who were peculiarly obnoxious to the king, entreated the archbishop to have compassion on themselves, who would be the first victims of Henry's fury if any farther opposition were made to his will. The earls of Leicester and Cornwall, two of the most powerful nobles in the kingdom (the latter of whom was uncle to the king), added their exhortations to the same effect, warning

Becket that, if he did not yield, blood would be shed, and that they themselves had received orders to proceed to such an extremity of violence. Becket, on the other hand, endeavoured to calm the fears of the bishops; and to the threats of personal danger he replied, that he was ready to die in the cause of the Church. At length, when two of the chief of the Knights Templars remonstrated with him, and assured him that the king would not exact from him anything that was inconsistent with the privileges of his order, the archbishop, unable to resist any longer the tears and entreaties of so many eminent persons, repeated the promise he had made before to the king, and omitting all mention of his order, solemnly pledged his word that he would observe, bonâ fide, the customs of the realm. The other bishops did the same, and a committee, consisting of those who were supposed to know what these customs were, was appointed, for the purpose of reducing them to writing. This work occupied two days; and on the second day, the result of the deliberations of the committee was drawn up and embodied in Sixteen Articles, which are generally known by the name of "The Constitutions of Clarendon."

These articles, though professing to be a statement of the ancient customs of the realm, are rather to be considered, for the most part, in the light of new enactments, intended to restrain the extravagant pretensions of the clerical body, and more especially the encroachments of the ecclesiastical courts, and the claim of the clergy to exemption from the jurisdiction of the king's courts. The third article therefore provides, that "clergymen being accused of any matter, upon summons from the king's judge, are to come and make answer there, to whatever the king's court shall think fit; and likewise to the ecclesiastical to make answer to whatever shall be there thought fit; but so that the king's justice may send to the court of Holy Church, to see how matters are there carried; and if a clerk be convicted or confess, the

Church ought not any longer to protect him." Other articles provided that, persons excommunicated ought not to give security for their conduct for the future, but only for standing to the judgment of the Church; that where a question arose as to whether an estate was held by the ecclesiastical tenure called frankalmoign, or free alms, or as a lay fee, it should be determined before the king's justice; and that any who were cited for a crime before the archdeacon or bishop, might be put under an interdict if they did not make satisfaction, but were not be to excommunicated until application had been made to the king's chief officer of the vill. It was also provided, that all questions of patronage of churches, either between laymen, or between laymen and clergymen, or between clergymen only, and also all pleas of debt, whether due upon solemn oath or not, should be cognisable only in the king's court. Archbishops, bishops, and other ecclesiastical persons were forbidden to depart from the kingdom without the king's licence; and were required to give security, if the king wished it, that they would procure no evil to him or the kingdom, either in going, or returning, or staying. It was also declared that none of the king's tenants in chief, or officers upon his demesnes, should be excommunicated, or have their estates laid under an inderdict, without application to the king if he were in the kingdom, or, in his absence, to his justice; and that appeals should proceed from the archdeacon to the bishop, from the bishop to the archbishop, and lastly to the king, so that the controversy should be ended in the archbishop's court by a precept from the king, and should go no further without the king's consent. The only other articles that seem to require particular notice are: the eleventh, which requires archbishops and bishops to "be present, as other barons, at judicial proceedings in the king's court till they come to deprivation of life or member;" and the twelfth, which is thus expressed: "When an archbishopric, bishopric, abbacy, or priory is vacant, it ought to be in the king's hands, and he shall receive all the rents and issues as of his own demesnes; and when the church is to be provided for, the king is to send his mandate to the chief parsons of that church, and the election ought to be made in the king's chapel, and by the advice of the king's parsons whom he shall call for this purpose; and the elect shall do homage and fealty to the king as to his liege lord, for his life and members and earthly honour (with a saving to his order), before he be consecrated."[1]

These articles being confirmed by the assent of the bishops and lay-peers, became for the time the law of the land. Three copies of them were made, one for each of the archbishops, and the other for the king. Becket received his copy, not, as he declared, to give a token of his assent to the contents, but that he might know against what dangers the Church would have to provide. To the king's request, that he would affix his seal to the document, he seems to have given an evasive answer.[2]

Upon retiring from the council, he was grieved on account of the artifices which had been used to induce him to yield, and vexed with himself for his compliance; and by way of voluntary penance he immediately suspended himself from officiating at the altar, until he could obtain absolution for his transgression from the Pope. As Alexander was then residing at Sens in France, the messenger whom Becket despatched, for the purpose of conveying the assurance of his repentance to that pontiff, returned in the course of a few weeks, and brought not only the desired absolution, but a letter of comfort and encouragement. Becket would gladly have gone to the Pope in person; but he could not do so openly without the king's licence, and when he attempted to make his escape privately, he was twice prevented by stormy weather from accomplishing his purpose. This circumstance coming to the king's ears, inflamed him still more against the archbishop, on account of the testimony which it afforded of his determination to resist the Constitutions of Clarendon, which expressly forbade such a departure from the kingdom. The dispute was aggravated by the counsels of the enemies of Becket, who took every opportunity of poisoning Henry's mind against him; nor was the conduct of the primate himself such as to open the way for a reconciliation, as he continued to use his utmost efforts to make the Constitutions of no effect, by protecting every clerk who was accused of a public crime, from prosecution in the king's court.

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[1] Johnson's Canons, vol. ii. pp. 51—55.

[2] Such is the statement of Herbert de Boseham. Fitz-Stephen says that he did affix his seal; the other biographers that he refused to do so.

Whatever just grounds of complaint Henry may have had against the archbishop for the contempt of these Constitutions, he no longer restrained himself within the limits of law and justice. His object henceforth was to humble Becket; and for this purpose, it was easy to call in the aid of the feudal law, which afforded many devices for enabling a lord to oppress an obnoxious vassal. A pretext was found for a charge against the archbishop of having denied justice in his own court to John Maréschal, one of the king's officers. Maréschal summoned Becket to answer the charge in the king's court; and, when he did not appear on the day named in the summons, he was summoned a second time to appear before the king at a great council held at Northampton. Before this assembly the primate was accused of having committed a contempt of the king; and the excuse which he made being deemed insufficient, he was adjudged by the unanimous sentence of the barons and prelates present, to have forfeited all his goods and chattels, which lay at the king's mercy.

A commutation of the sentence was permitted for a fine of 500*l*., for which all the bishops present gave security, except Foliot, bishop of London, the constant enemy of the primate.

This charge was followed by pecuniary demands against Becket for rents received from the castles of Eye and Berkhamstead. He was also required to refund certain sums said to have been lent to him by the king when Becket was with the army in France, as also the rents received by him as chancellor from the vacant bishoprics and other dignities, amounting altogether to an enormous sum. These demands were contrary to all justice, inasmuch as Becket had, previously to his consecration, at a solemn assembly of barons and prelates, been delivered up to the Church by the young Prince Henry, as the representative of his father, free from all secular obligations whatsoever. Whatever may have been the legal effect of such a proceeding, it was certainly in honour and conscience binding on the king, and it was a scandalous breach of faith to attempt to set it aside.

Becket requested leave to confer with the other prelates and clergy, with respect to the last-mentioned demand; and this indulgence being granted, the bishops and abbots assembled on the next day at his lodgings. Henry of Winchester proposed that he should try to soothe the king by money; and an offer was accordingly made of the sum of 2000 marks in satisfaction of the claim, which, however, was refused. Of the rest, some counselled the primate to be firm, and resist the demand, on the ground that he had been delivered up to the Church of Canterbury free from all secular claims. Others, who were supposed to know the king's mind, advised a resignation of the archbishopric. The whole of this and the following day (which was Sunday) were given up to deliberations. On the day after, Becket was too ill to rise from his bed. The king, hearing of this and believing that the indisposition was feigned, sent a deputation of barons, to demand whether the archbishop was willing to give security for rendering an account of the profits of the vacant sees received during his chancellorship, and abide by the judgment of the king's court on the matter. Becket, in reply, alleged the state of his health as an excuse for not waiting on the king; but promised to be in attendance on the following day, even if he were carried to the council on a litter. In the meantime, the idea occurred to him of going barefoot, with his cross in his hand, to throw himself at the king's feet and offer supplications for the peace of the Church. From this purpose, however, he was turned aside by the advice of the clergy who attended him, and who were unwilling that he should do any act which might aggravate, instead of appeasing, the king's wrath. On the following morning rumours began to prevail, derived partly from some of the courtiers who were still friendly to Becket (and which the circumstances that led some years afterwards to his assassination, showed to be not altogether without foundation), that that day would witness the infliction of some grievous act of vengeance on the archbishop, or perhaps his violent death. The terrified prelates assembled early at Becket's lodgings, and tried to induce him to avoid the impending storm by resigning the archbishopric. His answer was one of severe rebuke for their cowardice and baseness in deserting their metropolitan. He reproached them for their breach of canonical obedience in having sat in judgment upon him; and charged them, in virtue of the allegiance which they owed him, and out of regard to the peril of their order, that they should not presume to be present at any such judgment in future, at the same time announcing his intention to appeal to Rome against such a breach of ecclesiastical discipline. Lastly, referring to the rumour that violent hands were soon to be laid upon him, he commanded them that, in that case, they should visit with spiritual censures all those who might dare to attack his person. Against this injunction Foliot made a formal protest, in the shape of an appeal to the Pope; the rest departed from Becket's chamber to the court in silence, with the exception of the Bishops of Winchester and Salisbury, who remained to offer him some words of comfort.

And now Becket, seeing that he was in a great measure deserted by man, betook himself to the help of God's grace, as his only means of support for the coming contest. Immediately after the departure of the bishops, he entered into a neighbouring church, and celebrated the mass of St. Stephen the martyr, of which service the words of the Psalm, "Princes sate and spake against me," form part; and then, mounting his horse and preceded by his cross-bearer, he set out for the palace. Having dismounted at the gate, he took the cross into his own hands, and so entered into the inner hall. His appearance in this fashion astonished alike both his friends and his enemies. The Bishop of Hereford, whom he had himself consecrated, would have taken the cross out of his hands, but Becket resisted; while his bitter enemy, Foliot, reproached him with the charge of infatuation, and warned him that the act of carrying his cross would be construed as a defiance by the king. "If the king shall draw his sword," said he, "as you have now drawn yours, what hope of reconciliation between you henceforth can there be?" Becket, paying little regard to such interruptions, proceeded through the hall with his attendant clergymen into an inner chamber, and took his seat among the bishops, still carrying his cross in his hands.

The king, who was in the banqueting-room, in another part of the palace, hearing of this proceeding, summoned all the other prelates and barons thither to his council. In this assembly he complained of Becket's conduct, as insolent to his sovereign; and all who were present being of the same opinion, it was proposed forthwith to impeach him for perjury and high treason. A report of this intention quickly spread into the hall below in which Becket sat; threats and insults were freely bestowed upon the archbishop and his followers by the royal retainers, who would hardly allow him to exchange a few words of sympathy with the two faithful attendants who sat at his feet, and who afterwards wrote separate accounts of this extraordinary scene.[1] The most fearful apprehensions were now entertained by all who either cared for Becket's person or were desirous of preventing bloodshed. The bishops themselves, even those who were most hostile to Becket, thoroughly partook of the general alarm, and anxiously sought leave of the king to deliberate apart from the other peers, as to the course which they should take. They were in this dilemma, that they must either brave the king's indignation, by setting at nought that article[2] of the Constitutions of Clarendon, which required them to be present, as other barons, at judicial proceedings in the king's court, or incur the penalty of disobedience to the express orders of their primate by sitting in judgment upon him. At length they hit upon the expedient of appealing themselves to Rome against the archbishop's prohibition. Having obtained the king's consent to this proceeding, they announced their intention to Becket by their spokesman, the Bishop of Chichester, who in a formal speech complained of the archbishop's conduct, that, after persuading his suffragans to assent to the Constitutions of Clarendon, he now placed them in such a position, that they must either disregard those Constitutions, or disobey their primate.

Becket received the announcement of their intended appeal with an appearance of indifference, but with real pleasure. The promise to keep the Constitutions of Clarendon, he observed, was subject to this limitation, that they were to be binding only so far as they were consistent with the laws of the Church and the privileges of the clerical order. Those Constitutions, when referred by the king to the Pope for confirmation, were, upon the whole, rather disallowed than approved of. The Pontiff had thereby given a lesson to themselves, who were bound to receive what the Church of Rome received, to reject what she rejected. If they had sworn to observe what was unjust or unlawful, the oath was not binding.

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[1] William Fitz-Stephen and Herbert de Boseham.

[2] Art XI.

The bishops having delivered their appeal, took their seats in the hall near the archbishop and awaited the announcement of the judgment. In a short time, the earl of Leicester came from the banqueting-room, where the king was; and, in the name of the peers, called on Becket to hear his sentence. The primate's demeanour was composed and majestic at this critical moment. He called upon all who were present, as a father addressing his children; and solemnly forbade them, in virtue of their obedience to him as their archbishop, and in the name of the faith which they professed, to pass any sentence of judgment upon his person. The earl nevertheless proceeded, though somewhat unwillingly, to discharge the office imposed upon him; and was on the point of declaring the archbishop guilty of perjury, when Becket, protesting that the lay peers were not competent to pass sentence upon him for a crime, cut short the proceeding by rising abruptly to depart. As he advanced to the door bearing his cross, his departure gave rise to much clamour and confusion, and he was assailed with reproaches and insults. Some of the knights called him a traitor, and this word for once roused the latent military spirit within him. He declared that, if it were not for his order, he would prove by arms the falsehood of the charge. After this no further obstacle was offered to his retreat; and he returned in safety to his lodgings amidst the acclamations of the multitude who sought his benediction.

The remainder of the day was spent in anxious consultation with the few friends who still adhered to him, in taking leave of others who were fearful of hazarding their own safety by giving umbrage to the king, and in preparation for flight. After dinner, he sent the bishop of Rochester, who was his chaplain, and the bishops of Hereford and Worcester, whom he had himself consecrated to the episcopal office, to petition the king for leave to depart out of the country. As Henry declined giving his answer till the next day, evil was augured from the delay, and it was determined that the archbishop should fly that night. To conceal his purpose, he gave directions that a bed should be prepared for him in the church; but in the dead of the night he made his escape from the town with two of his chaplains and a servant under cover of the darkness and amidst a storm of heavy rain; the secret of his flight being known only to a few confidential friends and dependants. The next day he arrived at Lincoln, and thence he travelled in disguise, chiefly by night, to the coast of Kent, from which he escaped to Gravelines in Flanders, on the fifteenth day after his departure from Northampton.[1]

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[1] Herbert de Boseham Fitz-Stephen; Grim; Roger de Pontigny.

CHAP. XVI.

THE ANGLO-NORMAN CHURCH, FROM THE COUNCIL OF NORTHAMPTON TO THE MURDER OF BECKET.

BECKET was received on the other side of the Channel, with every mark of respect for his person and compassion for his misfortunes. Both in Flanders and in France all were eager to show honour to the illustrious exile, and to furnish him with everything needful for his comfort and for the safe prosecution of his journey. After leaving Flanders, he proceeded to Soissons, where he was visited by Louis VII. king of France, who had already promised to the archbishop's messengers that he should find peace and protection if he took up his residence in his dominions. After a stay of a few days, he hastened on to Sens, the abode of Pope Alexander, by whom he was received with marked kindness and distinction.

Previously to his arrival, the Pope had given audience, with his cardinals in full consistory, to an embassy from the king of England, which had been despatched immediately after Becket's flight, for the purpose of accusing the primate. The ambassadors were the archbishop of York and the bishops of London, Chichester, Exeter, and Worcester, with the earl of Arundel and three other lay peers, who charged Becket with being a disturber of the peace of the kingdom and of the Church, who, after insulting the king and bringing the Church into contempt, had fled from the country and deserted his post as primate. They requested the Pontiff to send the archbishop back to England, and also a legate a latere, who might hear the king's complaint against him there, where the truth of the facts could be most easily ascertained. Some of the cardinals, who had been gained over to the king's interest by money, were disposed to accede to this request. The Pope, however, though with some reluctance, refused to entertain it, except on the condition that the ambassadors should wait for the archbishop's arrival at Sens; since he could not allow anything to be done to his prejudice in his absence. This suggestion the ambassadors declined to adopt, as they had received orders from the king to return within a limited time; and finding that they could not persuade the Pope, either by arguments or promises, to listen to their petition, they departed hastily from the Papal court, to return to England.

Some days after Becket's arrival at Sens, Alexander gave him an audience in his chamber, at which none but the cardinals were present. On this occasion, the archbishop entered fully into the history of all that had passed between him and the king, and frankly confessed his fault in assenting to the Constitutions of Clarendon. He produced the Constitutions themselves, which neither the Pope nor the cardinals had seen before, although they had received information respecting their contents and purport. After they had gone through all the articles (some of which were read again and again with the utmost attention), the Pope expressed strongly his disapprobation of the conduct of Becket and the other bishops, who, by assenting to what were not to be called "customs," but "tyrannical usurpations," had renounced their pontifical power, and reduced the Church to slavery. He added, that among these "abominable" things that had been read, none were to be called good; though some might be tolerated, the greater part were to be reprobated as condemned by ancient councils, and opposed to the authority of Scripture. In conclusion, however, he informed Becket that, though the offence committed by himself and his brother bishops was exceedingly great, he was disposed to deal mercifully with him, especially in consideration of the contrition which he had shown, the sufferings which he had undergone on account of his error, and the devotion and humility with which he had sought access to the Apostolic see, notwithstanding the perils attending the journey.[1]

It is said that Becket actually resigned the archbishopric into the hands of the Pope, on the ground of his election having been uncanonical; but that the Pope, after three days, reinvested him with the dignity.[2] Such a resignation would probably have met the wishes of those cardinals who were inclined to favour the king; but the Pope doubtless saw the importance of retaining in his office, one who was so well able to bear the brunt of the contest between the civil and ecclesiastical powers.

After a stay of about three weeks at the Papal court, Becket chose for his abode the monastery of Pontigny in Burgundy, situated not very far from Sens and belonging to the order of Cistercian monks. In this retreat he gave himself up to a life of religious study, meditation, and prayer; but his tranquillity was soon disturbed by the arrival of news from England, of a painful and distressing kind.

Upon the failure of his embassy to the Papal court, the king had given orders that any person who brought to England letters of interdict from the Pope or the archbishop, or who appealed to either of them, should be arrested and kept prisoner during his pleasure. He confiscated the revenues of the Church of Canterbury, and all the property of the archbishop and of the clergymen who had followed him into exile, and forbade the offering up of prayers for him in the churches.[3] Not content with this piece of barbarous severity, he proceeded to wreak his vengeance upon Becket's relations, friends, and dependants, and even upon the relatives of his companions in exile. These innocent persons were at once deprived of all their possessions and driven into banishment; and, by a refinement of cruelty most disgraceful to a Christian sovereign, were compelled to take an oath that they would visit Becket wherever he was to be found. The consequence of this atrocious proceeding was, that the monastery of Pontigny was beset by a crowd of exiles in the deepest distress, comprising persons of every age and both sexes, from the gray-headed old man to the mother with her infant in arms, the sight of whose sufferings brought upon them by their connection with Becket, aggravated to the utmost the afflictions of the primate himself. Their number would have been still greater, had not the Pope, by a convenient interposition of his assumed dispensing power, absolved many of them from the obligation of their oath, so as to enable them to remain in Flanders. The rest were in a short time distributed in various parts of France; the king, the nobles, the prelates, and the monastic bodies emulating each other in the generous work of Christian hospitality to the unfortunate.[1]

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[1] De Boseham.
[2] Fitz Stephen; Grim.
[3] Wendover, vol. i. p. 546. Giles's translation.

In the second year of his exile, Becket determined that he would no longer keep silence, but assert the cause of the Church for which he was in banishment, in such a manner as either to move the king to repentance, or to subdue him by spiritual weapons. While he urged the Pope to rise up and no longer permit his adversaries to insult him, he remonstrated strongly with the cardinals, on account of their venality and the hindrances which they opposed to the cause of justice.[2] Henry himself he addressed in a tone of affectionate warning, as his spiritual son; reminding him of the written profession which he had laid on God's altar at his coronation, that he would preserve the liberty of the Church. He did not scruple to assert, in the loftiest terms, the privileges of the clerical order, and the superiority of the ecclesiastical to the civil power; he pointed out the warnings which sacred Scripture and history held out to those in high places, who despised the commandments of God; and finally expressed without reserve his determination, if the king remained impenitent, to launch against him the thunders of the Church.[1] The austerities of the life which he led in his retreat had sharpened his temper, while its studies kindled his enthusiasm for the contest which seemed to be impending. He had already, since his exile, obtained from the Pope the office of legate in England, in order that whatever sentence he might pronounce against his opponents might have greater weight.[2] Being thus armed and prepared, he only waited for the opportunity, which the rejection of his overtures by the king soon afforded, of striking a decisive blow.

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[1] De Boseham; Fitz-Stephen.

[2] Letters of Becket by Giles, vol. iii. Nos. 9, 10. 29.

On Ascension Day, in 1166, at the neighbouring church of Vizelay, in the presence of a numerous assembly of persons, he publicly from the pulpit condemned and annulled the Constitutions of Clarendon, especially those parts which were most opposed to the pretensions of the clergy. He excommunicated by name those of the king's ministers who had taken possession of the property of the church of Canterbury, as well as those who had framed the Constitutions; and by a general sentence he cut off from the society of the faithful all who observed, enforced, counselled, or defended those enactments, and absolved the English bishops from their oath to observe them. He also excommunicated by name John of Oxford, one of the king's chaplains, for uncanonical intrusion into the deanery of Salisbury, and for holding communion with a notorious schismatic, Reginald archbishop of Cologne, who supported the rival Pope.

Although the king was not personally included in this sentence, the archbishop did not hesitate, at the same time, to threaten him with the same punishment, and to declare that he only delayed proceeding against him in the hope of his repentance.[1]

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[1] Letters of Becket by Giles, vol. iii. Nos. 179, 180.

[2] De Boseham.

Henry was now seriously alarmed at the prospect of the archbishop's spiritual weapons being launched either against himself or his kingdom. He gave orders that the ports of the country should be strictly guarded, to prevent the introduction of letters of interdict; and that any person bringing them should be subjected to the most cruel and degrading punishments.[2]

By way of diminishing Becket's power to annoy him, he determined to oppose Alexander, and take up the cause of Guido of Crema, or Paschal as he called himself, the rival Pope. His ambassadors (of whom John of Oxford was one) took an oath in their master's name at a Diet at Wurtzburg, that he would support Paschal; a fact which was announced to the Germans by a public edict of the emperor, though Henry afterwards authorised the archbishop of Rouen to disavow it to the court of Rome.[3]

This bold proceeding of Henry appears to have alarmed the Pope, who, in a letter to Foliot bishop of London, complained of the king's conduct, in communicating with schismatics and excommunicated persons, and exhorted Foliot to admonish him to desist from his transgressions in this and other matters, and restore Becket to his see.

Foliot (whose character is not to be judged by the manner in which Becket speaks of him in his letters) appears to have been highly esteemed by the Pope, on account of his learning and piety.[4] He was in deed a remarkable man, and would have been so regarded by posterity, as well as by his cotemporaries, had he not been eclipsed by the superior talents of the primate. When Henry applied to the Pope to sanction his translation to the see of London, the request was readily granted; and it is worthy of our notice, that though circumstances made him the friend of Henry and the enemy of Becket, he was as little disposed to resist the Papal authority as any other ecclesiastic of the age. In his answer to the Pope, he stated that Henry expressed in strong terms his feelings of love and reverence towards the Pope and the Roman Church, and his readiness to obey his commands, saving his own dignity and the dignity of his kingdom. The king declared that he had not hitherto hindered any persons from visiting the Papal court, nor would he do so hereafter; and that, if the Papal rights and privileges had been prejudiced in any way by his acts, he would speedily make amends as the judgment of the church of his own kingdom should decide, and he was ready to refer the consideration of his transactions with the emperor to the same body.

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[1] Wendover, vol. i. p. 550.; Letters of Becket by Giles, vol. iii. Nos. 5. 3; De Boseham.

[2] Giles, vol. iv. No. 372.

[3] Wendover, vol. i. p. 556.; Giles, vol. vi. No. 511.; Ibid. vol. iv. No. 320.

[4] Giles, vol. vi.; Letters of Foliot, Nos. 359. 364, 365.

Foliot then took the opportunity of imploring the Pope to temper his zeal with moderation, and not push matters to the extremity of an interdict or excommunication, lest he should irrevocably alienate the king and the various nations under his dominion, from the obedience of the Roman see. It was better to endure for a while, than by excess of zeal to run such fearful risks. Even though many of the bishops should not prove faithless; yet there would not be wanting some who would bow the knee to Baal, and receive the pall of Canterbury from the hand of the idol (as he called the rival Pope), without any regard to religion or justice; and occupants for the episcopal sees would easily be found, who would serve the usurper with all the devotion of their minds.[1]

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[1] Giles, vol. iv. No. 282.; vol. v. No. 174.

The support of the rival Pope was a measure the success of which was very doubtful: it seemed better policy for Henry to endeavour, either to gain Alexander over to his side, or to prevent him from giving any active support to Becket. In furtherance of these objects he did not scruple to encourage his bishops to adopt a practice which the Constitutions of Clarendon were intended to prevent; viz. that of appeal from the archbishop to the Pope. This gave rise to much delay in the subsequent proceedings (which was increased by the circumstance of Alexander having returned to Rome), and to gain time was with Henry a great object. The English bishops addressed a letter to their primate, in which, after complaining of his threat against the king and protesting against his proceedings, both with respect to John of Oxford and the bishop of Salisbury (whom he had suspended for admitting John to the deanery of that church), they announced that they had appealed to the Pope to prevent the exercise of such acts of authority for the future against the king, or kingdom, or the churches committed to their charge. Becket replied at great length, and expressed his indignation in the strongest terms at the conduct of his suffragans towards himself, and their desertion of him in the time of trial. He suspected that their letter was Foliot's composition, and he lashed that prelate with unmerciful satire, as having, by his ambition and envy on account of Becket's promotion, led to all the confusion that had taken place. He justly complained of the attempt to suspend his own authority by an appeal; and argued with reason, that appeals were intended as a remedy for the oppressed against the oppressor, and not to enable the oppressor, by using another's name, to maintain his injury.[1]

Notwithstanding the just grounds that existed for refusing to entertain such appeals, Alexander did not think it prudent to reject them. At the king's especial request, he despatched two legates a latere, the cardinals William of Pavia and Otho, with authority over all Henry's Continental dominions, and with full powers to hear and determine the cause between him and the archbishop. This measure was decidedly hostile to the interests of Becket, who considered William of Pavia his open enemy, and who declared that the Pope had thereby strangled, not only himself and all the ecclesiastical persons of both kingdoms, but the Churches of England and France also. Alexander himself seems to have been ashamed of his own act, as he requested that his letter to Henry, announcing the mission of the legates, should be kept secret. The fact, however, became quickly known, through the boasting of John of Oxford, who had been employed by the king as his envoy to the court of Rome, for the purpose of obtaining this favour from the Pope. The king of France threatened to refuse permission for the legates to enter his dominions; and it was represented to Alexander that Henry's object was to gain time and protract the dispute till a vacancy of the Papal chair should occur, in which case he intended to make the recognition of "the customs" the condition upon which he would acknowledge the succeeding Pope. This circumstance, and perhaps also a feeling of shame at his appearing to desert Becket, led Alexander to restrict the powers of the legates, so as to invest them with the character of mediators instead of that of judges.[1] The archbishop was now resident at Sens, where, through the kindness of king Louis, he had found a retreat in the monastery of Columba, having been forced to quit Pontigny on account of Henry's threat of vengeance upon the Cistercian monks for harbouring his enemy. The cardinals, after visiting Henry in Normandy, sought a conference with Becket at his new abode, at which they proposed that they should move the king to agree simply to his return to his see, without any mention being made of "the customs." On the other hand, Becket and his friends insisted, not only on the express abolition of "the customs," but also on the restitution of all the property that had been taken away from themselves and the Church. The contracting parties being thus unable to agree to the preliminary articles of the negotiation, the treaty soon came to an end, and the legates returned to Rome.[1]

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[1] Giles, vol. iii. No. 75.; vol. vi. Nos. 436, 437.

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[1] Giles, vol. iii. No. 90; vol. iv. No. 215. 299. 355.; vol. vi. No. 404.

The negotiations that took place during the next two years[2] were tedious and ineffectual, and the conduct of all the chief persons concerned in them was highly reprehensible. Henry only sought for delay. Louis, while he favoured Becket, laid himself open to the imputation that he was seeking to humble the king of England, his too powerful vassal. Becket's avowed object was to subdue the king by spiritual weapons; and being unable to persuade the Pope to adopt this policy, while he was restrained by his express commands from either attacking Henry himself or putting the kingdom under an interdict, he was forced to be content with launching excommunications against inferior persons, such as his old enemy Foliot, the bishop of Salisbury, and several official persons and attendants upon the court, both lay and clerical.[3] The number of these last was so great that it was difficult to find a chaplain of the king, who was not disqualified for bestowing the kiss of peace in the mass. On the other hand, the Pope's conduct was vacillating in the extreme. While he received the appeals of the king and the English bishops, he refused to settle the dispute by a definitive judicial sentence.[4] He declined drawing the spiritual sword himself, and expressed strongly his disapprobation of Becket's conduct with respect to the excommunications. He even annulled those censures, restored John of Oxford to his deanery, and caused Foliot to be absolved. Notwithstanding this, he warned Henry that the restraint which he had put on the archbishop, was only temporary; and that ultimately, if the king did not repent, Becket would be permitted to proceed to extremities. On one occasion Henry expressed to the Pope's legates that he was willing to concede all that Becket demanded for himself and his friends, "saving the dignity of his kingdom." On another the archbishop, at a personal conference with the king, was persuaded to submit himself in all respects to the clemency of Henry, and to promise to comply with his wishes; but no persuasions could induce him to abstain from adding the qualification, "saving the honour of God." The qualification in each case was a fatal obstacle to peace. At another conference between the king and the archbishop, the terms of reconciliation seemed to be settled, without any provisoes or conditions likely to lead to future discord, when Becket, acting upon advice received from the Pope, requested the king to bestow upon him the kiss of peace, as a token of restoration to favour after so long an alienation. This reasonable petition, however, was refused, on the pretext that the king had formerly in anger publicly sworn that he would never give it to him.[1]

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[1] De Boseham.

[2] 1168—1170.

[3] Giles, vol. iii. No. 14.; vol. iv. No. 219.; De Boseham.

[4] Compare his letter to Henry (Giles, vol. iv. No. 299.), in which he says he has given the legates full powers to determine the cause, with that to Becket (ibid. No. 215.), in which he speaks of them as mediators to bring about a reconciliation.

In the year 1170, Henry, who had resided for several years in France, returned to England to be present at the coronation of his eldest son Henry, whom he had resolved to admit to a share of the royal dignity. The office of crowning the kings of England belonged by ancient custom to the archbishops of Canterbury; and Becket, who was not disposed to give up any privilege belonging to his see, had previously procured from the Pope letters forbidding the archbishop of York, or any of the English prelates, to officiate at the prince's coronation. These letters do not appear to have reached England before the ceremony was concluded.[1] If the archbishop of York entertained any scruples about performing this office, they were removed by the production of a pretended letter from Alexander, empowering him to proceed with the coronation[2]; and he crowned the young king at Westminster in June, 1170, with the assistance of the bishops of London, Salisbury, and several other prelates.

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[1] De Bosebam; Giles, vol. iii. Nos. 16. 24. 109.; vol. iv. Nos. 216. 220. 306. 361, 362.; vol. vi. No. 490.

Whatever may have been the political reasons for this proceeding, it was attended with injurious effects upon the king's cause, by bringing the dispute with Becket to a crisis, and compelling the Pope to interfere with authority. Alexander had, previously to the king's departure, issued a commission, directed to the archbishop of Rouen and the bishop of Nevers, with full powers to bring the whole matter to a decisive result. If Henry did not, within forty days after warning received, make peace with the archbishop and restore to him and his followers all that had been taken from them, and bestow on him the kiss of peace (unless he was willing to receive it from the young king instead), these prelates were commanded to place all his Continental dominions under an interdict, by which every divine office was forbidden, except the baptism of infants and the absolution of the dying.[3] On receiving the news of the young king's coronation, the Pope issued letters of excommunication against the bishops of London and Salisbury, and of suspension against the archbishop of York and the other prelates who had assisted at the ceremony. He complained that they had, not only invaded the privilege of the see of Canterbury, but crowned the prince without requiring the usual oath to preserve the liberties of the Church, and permitted him to substitute an obligation to observe the odious "customs."[1] These letters were entrusted to Becket, that he might make such use of them as he chose.

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[1] Wendover, vol. ii. p. 20.

[2] Giles, vol. iii. No. 24.; vol. iv. No. 244, 245. Lingard says that this last letter was a forgery.

[3] Giles, vol. iv. Nos. 230. 253, 254.

Henry now had the fear of that most dreadful of all Papal weapons—an interdict, so plainly set before his eyes, that his only course of action was to submit with as good a grace as possible. Under these circumstances another conference between him and Becket took place, in a spacious meadow near Fretville, on the borders of Touraine. As soon as the archbishop appeared in sight, the king hastened forward with uncovered head to salute him courteously, after which they rode together apart as if nothing had ever occurred to disturb their friendship. After some general exhortations and admonitions, which Henry received with apparent kindness, Becket proceeded to complain of the injury done by him to the see of Canterbury, in encouraging the usurpation of its privileges by the archbishop of York and the other prelates, in the matter of the prince's coronation. The king, after some discussion, promised redress of this grievance, and added, "As for those who have hitherto betrayed me and you, by God's help I will so deal with them as traitors deserve." At these words Becket dismounted, and threw himself at the feet of his sovereign; but the king laid hold of his stirrup and compelled him to remount, adding with tears, "My lord archbishop, let us renew our ancient affection for one another, and forget altogether the enmity that has gone before; but, I pray you, show me honour before those who are observing our conduct at a distance." And, turning to these persons, he observed, "I find the archbishop in the best possible disposition towards me; and if I am not equally well disposed to him in my turn, I shall be the worst of men, and prove the truth of all the evil things that are said of me."

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[1] Giles, vol. iv. Nos. 230. 249. 272.

Becket then presented his petition through the archbishop of Sens, praying the king to admit him back to his favour, to grant peace and security to him and his followers, to restore the possessions of the see of Canterbury, and to make amends to that church for the injury done to it in the coronation of his son. In return he promised him love, honour, and every service which an archbishop could render in the Lord to his sovereign. Henry assented graciously, and, after some further conference, it was agreed that Becket, after taking leave of Louis and his other benefactors, and arranging his affairs, should come back to Henry's court, and remain there for awhile before his return to England, in order to give a proof to the world of the renewal of their friendship.[1]

Henry acted his part with so much skill on this occasion as to impress the bystanders with a belief in his sincerity, which Becket did not altogether share. No request was made at the conference for the kiss of peace, and it was said that Henry had sworn that he would not give it on that day. It was certainly a just cause of suspicion, which the king's subsequent conduct rather tended to confirm, that this outward token of reconciliation was wanting. It was especially remarked that on one occasion, when the archbishop should have celebrated mass in the king's chapel, of which rite the bestowing the kiss of peace formed part, Henry, with the obvious intention of avoiding this ceremony, gave directions that a mass for the departed should be celebrated instead.[2] His sincerity became still more open to suspicion in consequence of the vexatious delays interposed by him and his officers to prevent the fulfilment of the promise to restore the possessions of the church of Canterbury. Though the reconciliation with the archbishop had taken place on the 22nd of July, it became necessary in October for the Pope to issue another threat of an interdict, in order to compel him to observe the terms of the treaty; and even then the king levied the rents from the archiepiscopal lands up to Martinmas, having previously carried off the corn, and left the farms in a ruinous state. The clergymen, on whom he had bestowed some of the churches belonging to the see, still maintained their position; and the aspect of things was so unpropitious that the messengers whom Becket had sent beforehand to England, with Henry's orders for the restitution of the property taken away, advised him to delay his journey until he stood more firmly in the royal favour. But the intrepid archbishop was not a man to be turned aside from his purpose by the fears of his followers. Having taken leave of king Louis, and obtained permission to depart, he set out (as he expressed himself to Henry) "under the constraining influence of a necessity, which drew him to his unhappy Church, perhaps to die for its preservation."[1] Henry had promised to supply him with money, to pay his debts and the expenses of his journey, and either to accompany him to England in person, or to send the archbishop of Rouen with him. None of these pledges were fulfilled; some hostile proceedings of Louis were alleged as an excuse for the king's remaining in Normandy, and, instead of the companion promised, Becket's old enemy, John of Oxford, dean of Salisbury, was sent to attend him on the journey; while for his expenses the archbishop of Rouen generously gave him three hundred pounds of his own money.[2]

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[1] Giles, vol. iii. No. 25.

[2] De Boscham; Fitz-Stephen.

When he arrived at Whitsand, on the French coast, he sent on before him the Pope's letters, containing the suspension of the archbishop of York and the excommunication of the bishops of London and Salisbury.

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[1] Giles, vol. iii. No. 183.

[2] Ibid. No. 27.; vol. iv. No. 263. 394., vol. vi. No. 498.; Fitz-Stephen.

These three prelates, expecting Becket's arrival, were already at Canterbury, and, with their connivance, if not by their orders, a party of soldiers was sent to the coast, under Ranulph de Broc and the sheriff of Kent, to search the archbishop on his landing, and take away the letters. Becket disconcerted their design by causing the letters to be delivered to them beforehand, a promptness of action which afterwards proved fatal to himself. At the time it was so far successful that these prelates, when they were hoping to disarm their enemy, found themselves lying at his mercy. A few days afterwards, that is to say, on the 2nd of December, 1170, the archbishop landed at Sandwich, and was immediately beset by De Broc's soldiers, in a hostile manner. From this danger, however, he was delivered by the interposition of his conductor, John of Oxford, and arrived in safety at Canterbury. His journey through the country was like the triumphal progress of a conqueror, the parish clergy and their parishioners forming processions to escort him, and the poor people coming in crowds to throw themselves at his feet, to spread their garments in his way, and ask his blessing; nor was it thought presumption to apply to the return of their archbishop words which can hardly, without offence, be applied to an ordinary man: — "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."[1]

In Canterbury he was again urged by the king's officials, as well as by some of the clergy of the three bishops, to remit the sentences passed upon them. Becket replied that, though it did not belong to him, as an inferior judge, to annul the sentence of the apostolic see, yet, if the bishops of London and Salisbury would swear to submit to the judgment of the Pope, he would absolve them conditionally, and in the meantime treat them as brethren. These two prelates would have complied with the terms prescribed, had it not been for the opposition of the archbishop of York, at whose instigation they all three set off for Normandy, to make their complaint to the king. They had previously sent a message to the young king, to persuade him that Becket intended his deposition; and this device was so far successful, that when Becket went soon afterwards to pay his respects to that prince, he was met by messengers in London who forbade his further progress. It was evident that the courtiers, who sought his ruin, dreaded his influence over the prince, who had been his pupil. This journey, which was attended by the same popular demonstrations in Becket's favour which had followed him on the road to Canterbury, was also made a pretext for further misrepresentations. A few knights, formerly attached to his person, mingled with the multitude, which gave occasion to the report, industriously carried to Henry's ears, that he had traversed England with an army.[1]

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[1] Giles, vol. iii. No. 27.; De Boseham.

In the meantime, while these things were going on in England, and every day added some drops to the archbishop's cup of bitterness, through the insolence of the king's officials and the malice of his enemies, the three bishops had arrived at the king's court at Bure, in Normandy, to make their complaint against the primate. It appears from Becket's account of the matter to the Pope, that before their departure they summoned six of the clergy or monks of each of the cathedral churches of the sees then vacant, to wait upon the king in Normandy, for the purpose of electing persons to those sees who should be agreeable to him. Although this design does not seem to have been carried into execution, the existence of it is worthy of notice, as indicating the probability that, if Becket's life had been prolonged, it would have been a scene of continued strife with his sovereign, as he intimates that he would have refused to consecrate prelates so irregularly elected against the canons and in a foreign country.[1]

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[1] Fitz-Stephen.

The account given by the bishops excited in Henry one of those ungovernable fits of passion to which he was subject, and under the influence of which he was more like a wild beast than a rational being. In his phrensy he cursed the numerous band of retainers, whom he nourished and loaded daily with benefits, while none of them could be found to avenge him upon one priest, who thus disturbed his kingdom and sought to deprive him of his dignities. These words, which were repeated frequently in the reckless fury of passion, produced effects which the king had cause to rue for the remainder of his life. Four knights attached to the royal bedchamber, — Reginald Fitzurse, William de Tracy, Hugh de Moreville, and Richard Brito, — understood the words as an expression of the speaker's wish for the archbishop's death, and immediately conspired together to accomplish it. They set off for England by different routes, and arrived on the same day, December 28th, at the castle of Saltwood, the residence of the De Brocs, about six miles from Canterbury.

The event which the conspirators sought to bring about was one which Becket had for some time considered as probable, and professed himself ready to encounter cheerfully for the cause of Christ's Church.[2] On Christmas Day he ascended the pulpit in his cathedral, and preached at some length to the people, announcing to them, at the close of his sermon, with an emotion which drew forth the tears and sobs of his audience, that the time of his dissolution was now nigh at hand. He then publicly excommunicated Ranulph and Robert de Broc, and other officials of the king, who had distinguished themselves by their cruelty and violence towards his people.[1]

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[1] Giles, vol. iii. No. 27.

[2] Ibid. Nos. 27. 183.

On the 29th of December the four knights came to Canterbury, and with them several others, whom they had summoned from the neighbourhood in the king's name. Twelve of these proceeded with them, in the afternoon of the same day, to the archbishop's palace, while the rest dispersed themselves through the city, to prevent any movement among the citizens in his favour. Leaving their companions on the outside, the chief conspirators went straight to the archbishop's apartment, and sat down among his clergy and monks. They pretended to have a commission from the old king to demand the absolution of the prelates, and to require of Becket that he should go to Winchester, to make satisfaction to the young king for his offence against him. The archbishop calmly replied that the suspension and excommunication of the bishops were not his acts, but the Pope's, and were brought upon them by their invasion of the rights of the church of Canterbury; that it was not in his power to alter or annul the sentence of the Supreme Pontiff, although he had offered to absolve conditionally the bishops of London and Salisbury, which offer was refused; that his desire was, that the coronation of the young king should stand good, notwithstanding the punishment inflicted upon the person who crowned him; and that instead of wishing to disinherit him, he was willing that he should have many kingdoms, if thus it might be. When they proceeded to threats, he reminded them of the fact that some of them had, in former days, sworn fealty to him, and expressed his surprise that, knowing what had passed between them, they should come to threaten him in his own house.

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[1] De Boseham. Fitz-Stephen.

They replied, in anger, that nothing had passed between them to the prejudice of their allegiance to the king; and added that they would do more than threaten. Then, charging the monks and clergy present to take care that he did not escape, they retired.[1]

When they were gone, the attendants of the archbishop began to confer together anxiously as to the meaning of this intrusion. The threats used were sufficient to cause serious alarm, but Becket remained tranquil and undisturbed, and endeavoured to allay the fears of those around him. While they were debating, the conspirators and their followers attacked the outside of the palace, and having made a breach in the wall, were forcing their way into the interior. Upon this the monks entreated Becket to take refuge in the cathedral; and, finding him deaf to persuasion, they dragged him along with them by force. As they were sharply pursued by the assassins, they hastened to shut the doors of the church behind them, but the archbishop commanded them to be opened, saying that it was not right to turn Christ's house of prayer into a fortified castle. As he ascended the steps of the altar, Fitzurse and his companions burst into the church in complete armour, and with drawn swords. The terrified monks and clergy sought for refuge in different parts of the sacred edifice; and, as it was nearly dark, it would have been easy for the archbishop to have escaped to the crypts, with which that part of the church abounded, or by a staircase which led to the roof. He, however, disdained to fly, and, attended by three only of his followers, William Fitz-Stephen and Edward Grim (both of whom afterwards wrote his life), and a canon of the name of Robert, courageously awaited his fate. As the murderers approached the altar, one of them cried out, "Where is the traitor?" and, no answer being given, another voice added, "Where is the archbishop?"

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[1] Fitz-Stephen.

Upon this he replied, " Here I am, not a traitor, but a priest of God; and I marvel that you have entered the church of God in such a guise. What is your will?" They answered, "That you should die: it is impossible that you should any longer live." To which he rejoined, "I receive my death in the name of the Lord, and I commend my soul and the cause of the Church to God and Saint Mary, and the saints the patrons of this church. God forbid that I should fly on account of your swords; but by the authority of God I forbid you to touch any of my people." They then tried to drag him by force out of the church; but he, with the assistance of his companions, successfully resisted the attempt. In the struggle he received a wound on the head, which Edward Grim vainly endeavouring to parry, had his own arm cut off. As Becket wiped the blood from his head, he gave thanks to God, saying, " Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit." A second blow on the head laid him prostrate on the floor, at the foot of St. Bene't's altar, which stood by; a third and a fourth severed the upper part of his head from the remainder; after which one Hugh Horsea, a military subdeacon, who had joined the party, in a most brutal manner scattered his brains about the pavement. The monks, apprehensive of further insult to his remains, interred him hastily on the morrow, in a crypt of the cathedral near the high altar.[1]

Thus perished, in the fifty-third year of his age, Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, who, whatever may be thought of his ecclesiastical principles, or his conduct in maintaining those principles, must be regarded as the most remarkable Englishman of his age. The stern self-denial which he displayed in laying aside the indulgences of a life of luxury and the habits of a secular office, the determination with which he asserted the supposed rights of the Church against a powerful sovereign and a fierce nobility, and in spite of the cowardice of some brethren and the open hostility of others, showed an unconquerable will that nothing could move from its purpose; while his long endurance of exile and persecution, without abating one jot of his lofty pretensions, gave proofs of a courage that no dangers could terrify, and no sufferings subdue. Whether we contemplate Becket standing almost alone with a few clergymen in the hall at Northampton, unmoved by the taunts of false brethren and the despitefulness of the proud; or the same Becket preferring to live in exile at Pontigny, rather than submit as archbishop to what he regarded as degrading to his episcopal character, his conduct certainly may be contrasted most favourably with that of the courtly sycophants who were to be found among the bishops that supported the king.

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[1] Fitz-Stephen. Grim.

On the other hand, while we admire the energy, courage, and devotion of the man,—while we condemn the unjust and cruel persecution to which he and all belonging to him were subjected,—while we speak with abhorrence of the murder of a bishop at the altar of his own cathedral, during a festive season, by his own retainers,—we must not forget the real character of the principles for which he suffered, and which he was prepared to enforce at any risk. In his letters to Henry he declares, without any reservation, "that kings receive their authority from the Church"; and that "princes ought to submit to bishops, not to judge them;" "for," he adds, "there are two powers by which the world is chiefly governed: the sacred authority of the priest, and the royal power; of which the pontifical power has so much the greater weight, inasmuch as the priests are to give account at the divine judgment even of kings."[1] Now Becket's acts, in continually launching excommunications against his enemies, leave us no room for doubt that he intended, as far as he had the power so to do, to carry these principles fully into effect in his ecclesiastical government. And what would have been the consequences had such principles finally prevailed in England? It would not be too much to say, that in that case the people of this country, instead of being distinguished among the nations of the world for freedom, the love of truth, and a rational and sober zeal for religion, would, in all probability, have been as degraded, enslaved, and superstitious a race as those of Italy and Spain are at present. As it was, the cause for which Becket contended triumphed for a season. The atrocity of the crime by which he suffered, happening, as it did, at a time when men's minds were as yet entirely unprepared to shake off the trammels of superstition and the yoke of Papal bondage, caused a reaction in his favour, even in the minds of his bitterest enemies. The murderers met with no sympathy in the country, but were rather regarded with horror and aversion wherever they went. After they had remained for a time at a castle belonging to De Moreville, they were impelled, either by a feeling of disgust at the treatment which they received or by remorse for their crime, to quit England for Rome. There the Pope admitted them to penance, and they ended their days at Jerusalem in penitential austerities.[1]

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[1] Giles, vol. iii. No. 179. 180.

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[1] Collier, vol. ii. p. 318.; Lingard, vol. ii. p. 241. note.

CHAP. XVII.

THE ANGLO-NORMAN CHURCH, FROM THE MURDER OF BECKET TO THE DEATH OF JOHN.

Henry was overwhelmed with grief and consternation at the news of the primate's death. Notwithstanding his hostility to the ambitious pretensions of the clergy, he was really afraid of the weapons which they wielded; and his conscience told him that in the present instance their censures were deserved, as he had, by his own intemperate expressions, given encouragement to the act of the murderers. To avert the impending wrath of the Pope, and the terrors of an interdict, he was advised to send without delay a numerous embassy to Rome. The Pope was engaged in hearing an application from the suspended and excommunicated bishops for the remission of the sentences against them, when the news of Becket's murder arrived. Alexander was so afflicted at the intelligence, that for eight days he refused to see even his own friends. The king's envoys were empowered to declare, that Henry had neither commanded nor wished for the archbishop's death. For some time they were refused all access to the Papal presence, but at length, on the Thursday before Easter, they were permitted to deliver their message in a full consistory. Finding that there was no hope of averting an interdict by any other means, they swore that the king would abide by the commands of the Pope with respect to the matter in question, and would take an oath to observe them. Upon this Alexander abstained from pronouncing any sentence against Henry in person, but excommunicated, in general terms, the murderers of the archbishop, and all who had advised, abetted, or assented to the deed, and all who should harbour or countenance the assassins. He also affirmed a sentence of interdict, already pronounced by the archbishop of Sens, against the king's continental dominions, as well as the former sentences against the English bishops, who had assisted at the prince's coronation ; and commanded Henry for the present to abstain from entering a church, adding that he would send legates to examine and judge of the sincerity of his repentance.[1]

The threatened interdict was not carried into execution, but Henry was probably not sorry to have an excuse for withdrawing out of the way of Papal censures. In the earlier part of his reign he had conceived the project of conquering Ireland. At that time the Papal chair was occupied by Nicholas Breakspeare, Adrian IV., the only Englishman who ever attained to that dignity; and from him Henry obtained a grant of that country, founded on the absurd fiction, of which he was not ashamed to make use for his own purposes, that every Christian island was the property of the Papal see. The project was laid aside for several years, but resumed in 1171, at which time, the island having been already partially conquered by private adventurers from England, Henry's presence was required to assert his dominion over the conquerors, as well as to receive the submission of the natives. At an ecclesiastical synod held at Cashel his sovereignty was recognised, and some canons were made for the reformation of morals and discipline. His stay in the country, however, was not of sufficient duration to produce any lasting effect. In March, 1172, he returned hastily to Normandy to meet the Papal legates, the cardinals Theodwin and Albert.[2]

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[1] Giles, vol. iv. No. 331. vol. vi. Nos. 440. 469.

[2] Lingard, vol. ii. chap. 5

The first conference between them led to no satisfactory result; but a second took place at the city of Avranches, in Normandy, which was more successful. On this occasion, Henry, of his own accord, swore upon the holy gospels, that he had neither commanded nor wished for the death of the archbishop, but had been exceedingly grieved at the hearing of it. Admitting, however, that he had by his own conduct given occasion to the deed, he swore by way of satisfaction that he would never separate from Pope Alexander and his Catholic successors, so long as they acknowledged him as a Catholic king, and he made his eldest son take the same oath. He swore, further, that he would pay as much money to the Knights Templars as would suffice to provide two hundred knights for the defence of Jerusalem for a year against the Infidels; that he would take the cross (*i.e.* assume the character of a crusader) for three years from the following Christmas, and serve in person, if the Pope required it, against the Infidels, either in Jerusalem or in Spain. He abjured all the customs which might have been introduced, during his reign, to the prejudice of the Church ; and his eldest son did the same: and he also formally released the bishops from their promise to observe such customs. He promised to restore to the church of Canterbury the possessions which it enjoyed at the time of Becket's departure from the country, to make a full restitution of property and favour to the archbishop s friends who had been banished, and to grant permission to his subjects to appeal freely to the Pope in ecclesiastical causes, upon reasonable security being given, by all suspected persons, that they would not suffer such appeals to operate to the prejudice of the king or kingdom. In addition to the above articles, the legates declared that Henry promised of his own free will other things, which it was not necessary to commit to writing.[1] This has been supposed to refer to a secret article, by which he agreed to hold his kingdom in future as a fief of the Popedom.[1] The evidence on which this rests is questionable; but it seems not at all unlikely that a prince, by no means scrupulous, should have made such a concession for the purpose of escaping an interdict, although we can hardly suppose that he ever seriously intended to act upon it. Whether he proceeded to this extremity of humiliation or not, the legates at all events were satisfied, and solemnly absolved him from all spiritual censures.

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[1] Giles, vol. vi. No. 387, 388.

It is to be remarked, that, on this occasion, the king bound himself by oath to give up all the customs that had been introduced to the prejudice of the Church. We have before observed, that the Constitutions of Clarendon, though professing to be declarations of the ancient customs of England, are with more propriety to be regarded as legislative protests against the encroachments and extravagant pretensions of the clergy. As, however, they were formally enacted by the legislature of the realm, they could not be repealed by the mere word of the king, although from this time they were but little regarded. Four years later Hugo Petroleone came to England as the Pope's legate. During his stay in the country a great council was held at Northampton, at which the following articles were, after some opposition from the barons, enacted by way of settlement of the protracted question between the secular and spiritual courts. It was determined, 1st, That no clerk should be personally arraigned before a secular judge for any crime or transgression, except it were against the forest laws, or regarded a lay-fee for which he owed service to the king or some other lord: 2nd, That no bishopric or abbey should be kept in the king's hands longer than a year, except in case of urgent necessity: 3rd, That the murderers of clerks, on conviction or confession, should be punished before the king's justiciary in the presence of the bishop or his officer: 4th, That no clergyman should be obliged to submit to that species of appeal to the judgment of God which was called wager of battle.[1]

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[1] Lingard, vol. ii. p. 264. note.

Some months before the king made his peace with the Pope, Roger, archbishop of York, was restored to his archiepiscopal functions, upon his taking an oath that he had not received the Pope's prohibition before the coronation of the young king; that he had not sworn to observe the Constitutions of Clarendon; and that he had not, by word, deed, or writing, to his knowledge, promoted the death of archbishop Becket. The next year Foliot was absolved on submitting to similar terms.

The cathedral of Canterbury was considered as so desecrated by the crime committed within its walls, that for a whole year no divine services were celebrated therein. The pavement was torn up, the sound of the bells suspended, the walls stripped of their ornaments, and the whole place wore the outward garb of mourning for the atrocious deed. It was not till St. Thomas's day, 1171, that the suffragan bishops of the province met, according to the Pope's mandate, to restore the church to its former state, on which occasion, after a solemn mass, the bishop of Exeter preached a sermon on the text, "In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart thy comforts have refreshed my soul." [2]

Upwards of two years elapsed from the death of Becket before his successor was appointed. The prior and monks of Canterbury tried to assert the right of free election against the interference of the crown, but without success; and finally found it expedient to consult the king's pleasure in this matter. The object of their choice was Richard, prior of Dover, who, though approved by Henry, was obliged, in consequence of the opposition of the young king, to have recourse to the Pope for confirmation of his election. The vacant sees of Winchester, Lincoln, Bath, Hereford, Ely, and Chichester were filled up about the same time by a compromise between the crown and the cathedral chapters; and such was the height to which the Papal supremacy had now attained in England, that the bishops elect of these sees were expected to apply to the Pope for confirmation.[1] When the suffragan bishops of Canterbury met together to assist, according to custom, at the election of the new archbishop, a letter was read from the Pope, announcing to them the canonisation of Becket as a martyr, and enjoining them to observe solemnly the day on which he suffered, and "to endeavour by votive prayers to him to obtain pardon of their sins, that he, who for Christ's sake bravely endured exile during his life and martyrdom in death, might intercede unto God for them through the earnest supplications of the faithful."[2] The reason alleged for conferring this honour on Becket was the report generally believed that, within a few months after his death, such signs were displayed at his tomb that none who went there in faith returned without profit, by whatsoever infirmity they might be afflicted. Impossible as it is for us to admit the evidence of miracles said to have been wrought to prove the sanctity of one who displayed so little of the character of the Christian saint in his life, they were formerly received with eager credulity, not only by cotemporaries, but by succeeding generations; so that the tomb of Becket was, during some centuries, visited by thousands of pilgrims from all parts, and the church of Canterbury was enormously enriched by the offerings of their superstition. The testimony of public rumour with respect to these reputed prodigies was confirmed by the inquiries of the Papal legates, Albert and Theodwin, who made a report to Pope Alexander on the subject. The Pontiff was eager to avail himself of an excuse for exalting one who had suffered martyrdom for the cause of the extravagant pretensions of the clergy, and thereby to chastise and humble the powerful sovereign who had so long and so fiercely opposed those claims. This stroke of Papal policy succeeded too well. Becket was universally honoured as a martyr; and probably Henry, who (as we have before observed) was in reality deeply tainted with the superstition of the age, began by degrees to regard him in that light. His conscience told him that he had, though unintentionally, been the cause of the archbishop's death; and when his own sons broke out into rebellion, and joined a coalition of his most powerful enemies against him, it might naturally occur to his mind that all this evil had come upon him as a special judgment of heaven. This seems the most charitable, and perhaps the most probable, reason that can be given for the course of humiliation which he adopted. Landing in safety, after a storm, at Southampton from Normandy, he set off at once for Canterbury, without waiting to take any repose after his voyage. He rode all night, taking no refreshment but bread and water. When he drew near to Canterbury, he dismounted from his horse, and entered the city barefoot, and in the garb of a penitent. Having descended to the crypt in which the body of the archbishop lay, he remained there a long time prostrate and in prayer. Meanwhile the bishop of London was commanded to declare from the pulpit that the king had neither commanded nor desired, nor by any device contrived, the death of the Martyr. He had indeed hastily uttered some words, which the murderers misunderstood, and for that offence he now sought absolution of the bishops present. As a proof of the sincerity of his contrition, he bared his back, and received from every one of the ecclesiastics there assembled from three to five lashes. Then he resumed his garments, and, after making costly offerings for the Martyr's tomb, he spent the remainder of the day and the following night in grief and bitterness of mind. For three successive days he gave himself up to watching, fasting, and prayer; and cotemporary writers have recorded, that, immediately after these acts of humiliation, Henry's cause began to prosper, by the capture of the king of Scots, the dispersion of the young king Henry's fleet, the surrender of the castles of some rebel lords, and the departure of the Flemings out of the country. These coincidences, if not imaginary, were certainly remarkable, and we cannot be surprised when we find that the superstition of the age drew this inference from them, that the intercession of the Martyr had procured for the penitent monarch the favour and approbation of heaven.[1]

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[1] Wendover vol. ii. p. 34.; Lingard, vol. ii. p. 265.; Collier, vol. ii. p. 351.

[2] Psalm xciv. v. 19.; Wendover, vol. ii. pp. 20—22.

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[1] Collier, vol. ii. pp. 338—340.; Wendover, vol. ii. p. 23.

[2] Wendover, vol. ii. pp. 20. 24; Collier, vol. ix.; Records, No. 26.

Various circumstances prevented Henry from fulfilling the engagement, made at Avranches, to serve in person against the Infidels. He continued, however, to profess to entertain the project; and at length, in 1185, an embassy arrived in England from Jerusalem, headed by the patriarch, which formally offered him the sovereignty of that city, and of the Latin kingdom of which it formed the centre, in return for his protection. This offer, by the advice of the great council of the realm, he declined; and, instead of his personal service, promised a subsidy of 50,000 marks for the war. In 1187 the Christian world was astonished with the news, that the Holy City had fallen into the hands of the Mohammedans. After this a conference took place between Henry and Philip Augustus of France, at which the archbishop of Tyre, who was then preaching a new crusade against the Infidels, was present; and both these monarchs, as well as the earl of Flanders, and many other nobles and prelates, received the cross, as a token that they devoted themselves to the Holy War. The king of England then held a great council at Geddington, in Northamptonshire, at which it was enacted, that every one who did not join the crusade should pay one-tenth of his goods and rents to the expense of the expedition. Henry also caused a similar impost to be levied upon his continental dominions, and even went so far as to request from the emperors of Germany and Constantinople, and the king of Hungary, a safe passage for his forces through their dominions.[1]

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[1] Wendover, vol. ii. pp. 29, 30.; Lingard, vol. ii. pp. 272, 273.

Notwithstanding all these preparations, however, Henry never actually undertook in person an expedition to Palestine. The latter years of his life were chiefly occupied in wars with his rebellious and unnatural sons, two of whom (the young king Henry, and Geoffrey duke of Brittany) preceded him to the grave. He himself died in 1189, of a fever brought on by excess of grief, at the news that his favourite son John had joined a confederacy against him.

Archbishop Richard, who succeeded Becket in the primacy, was a person of a very different spirit from his predecessor, and was even blamed as too remiss in his office. Nevertheless he published a sentence of excommunication against those who should obstruct a good understanding between Henry and his sons, although he did not proceed further, so as to include the young king himself in the sentence. He took a course much more suitable to the character of a Christian bishop, by addressing to that prince a faithful and earnest remonstrance, which unhappily was given in vain.[2] His primacy was not distinguished by any remarkable ecclesiastical events; and the canons which bear his name are, for the most part, mere copies of former

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[1] Wendover, vol. ii. pp. 55, 56.; Lingard, vol. ii. p. 296.; Johnson's Canons, vol. ii. pp. 67—72.

[2] Collier, vol. ii. pp. 368. 372.

Papal or synodical decrees. On one occasion he remonstrated with spirit, though unsuccessfully, against the abuse of the exemption by Papal authority of abbeys from episcopal control.[1] The superiority of the Church of England to that of Scotland was verbally acknowledged by a solemn treaty, to which the king, barons, and prelates of Scotland were parties; but the Scotch bishops, though they attended the king of England's great council as his feudatories, refused to submit to the archbishop of York as their metropolitan, and their claim of independence was afterwards expressly confirmed by a bull of the Pope.[2] On the death of archbishop Richard, after some resistance on the part of the monks of Christchurch (who took every opportunity of contending for a right of free election, exclusive of all other parties), Baldwin, bishop of Worcester, was chosen to the vacant chair. This prelate became a crusader, and, together with Hubert, bishop of Salisbury, joined king Richard I. (the successor of Henry) in his expedition to the Holy Land, where he died at the siege of Acre, after bequeathing his property for the prosecution of the enterprise.[3] It does not belong to these pages to record the details of this crusade, nor does king Richard's reign offer any important materials for the history of the English Church. We cannot, however, help remarking one point, which the annals of this reign bring prominently before our notice, viz., the excessive devotion of the bishops of this period to secular pursuits. Thus we find Longchamps, bishop of Ely, made chancellor, justiciary, and a sort of regent of England during Richard's absence in Palestine. He was afterwards ignominiously expelled from the kingdom, and was unable to return thither for some time, though armed with the authority of a Papal legate. Hugh, bishop of Durham, held for a time the office of justiciary jointly with Longchamps, and disgraced his order by purchasing the earldom of Northumberland from the king.[1] Hubert, bishop of Sarum, who succeeded Baldwin in the primacy, also held the office of justiciary of England until compelled by the Pope to resign it.[2] Geoffrey, archbishop of York, a natural brother of the king, was suspended by the Pope for being guilty, among other offences, of the practices of hunting and hawking and other like diversions.[3] The character of the bishops being such, it was not to be wondered at, if the inferior clergy followed in the same path. Hence we find a bull of Pope Alexander III., expressly discharging the clergy of Berkshire from furnishing hawks and dogs for their archdeacon.[4]

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[1] Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 59—66.; Collier, vol. ii. p. 358.

[2] Collier, vol. ii. pp 345—349.; ibid. vol. ix.; Records, No. 29.

[3] Wendover, vol. ii. p. 99.

The claim of a freedom of choice in the election of an archbishop, that was now put forth by the prior and monks of Canterbury on every vacancy of the see, led to a project, first concerted between Henry II. and archbishop Baldwin, to build a college and found a society of secular canons at Ackington near Canterbury, to be endowed partly by the crown, and partly by the suffragans of the province. Their intention was, that this body should in future supersede the monks of Christchurch in the election of an archbishop, it being supposed that the new canons would be more dependent upon the wishes of their patrons than the monks. The prior and monks made a strenuous opposition to the undertaking, and finally succeeded in obtaining an order from the Pope for the demolition of the buildings. Baldwin afterwards attempted to revive the design, by commencing a similar institution at Lambeth, which, however, he did not live to finish. In the primacy of his successor, the dispute was finally settled by a compromise, which left the monks of Christchurch in possession of a privilege which, as the events of the succeeding reign showed, was most prejudicial to themselves, as it was fatal to the best interests of the country.[1]

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[1] Wendover, vol. ii. p. 82.

[2] Johnson, vol. ii. p. 74.; Lingard, vol. iii. p. 349.

[3] Collier, vol. ii. p. 404.

[4] Collier; Records, vol. ix. No. 28.

The right successfully claimed by the crown in Anglo-Saxon times, to appoint the prelates of the Church, or to control their elections when they were nominally chosen by the clergy, did not suffer any diminution in the vigorous hands of the early Norman kings. Though the forms of the old canonical system of election were still observed, the appointments virtually rested with the crown; and it cannot be questioned that Lanfranc, Anselm, and Becket, the most strenuous champions of clerical privileges, were each of them nominated by their respective sovereigns. It seems, however, that in the case of a vacancy of the archiepiscopal see of Canterbury, the suffragan bishops claimed the right of assisting at the election of a successor, though without any intention of exercising a choice independent of the crown. This claim of the suffragan bishops was strenuously opposed by the prior and monks of Christchurch, who formed the chapter of the cathedral of Canterbury, and who, in the cases of archbishops Richard, Baldwin, and Hubert, tried to establish a freedom of episcopal election unknown in England since the conquest. They admitted the necessity of obtaining from the crown in the first instance the congé d'élire (as it was called), or leave to elect, and of presenting the person elected to the king for his approbation afterwards; but, with these qualifications, they contended for an unrestricted right of choice. The time seemed favourable for putting forward such a claim, in which they were sure that they would be supported by the Papal see. The long contest, which Henry II. had maintained against Becket and the Pope, had terminated unsuccessfully for the sovereign, in a complete surrender of the main points for which he had fought. The consequence of this utter prostration of the civil power was, that the Papal Supremacy was now rapidly tending to a height which it had never before attained in England. The Pope (as we have seen lately) assumed the right, which had been claimed more than a century before by a constitution of Alexander II., of confirming the elections of suffragan bishops; and so little of national feeling existed in the minds of the leading ecclesiastics, that the canons of archbishop Hubert's synods, held at York and Westminster in 1195 and 1200, contained an express saving of the rights and dignity of the Roman See and Church.[1]

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[1] Collier, vol. ii. pp. 375—378. 411.

The last year of the 12th century beheld the usurpation of the crown of England by the least worthy monarch who ever held that high dignity, while, at the same time, the Papal chair was occupied by the most able and energetic Pontiff who ever claimed the assumed rights and authority of the successor of St. Peter. The fact that John and Innocent III. were cotemporaries at a period when the rights of Church and State were ill-defined and in perpetual conflict with each other, was a sure augury of the coming degradation of the Church and kingdom of England. The representative and champion of the rights of independent sovereigns, in the struggle that we are about to relate, was a despicable coward, faithless, perjured, profligate to a degree even beyond the corruptions of a licentious age, detested by his subjects on account of his cruelty, and justly suspected of the odious crime of having murdered his nephew Arthur, duke of Brittany, to prevent his claiming the English crown. The Pontiff, on the other hand, was one whose vigour of character, and extravagant notions of Papal power, in which he equalled, if he did not exceed, Gregory VII., were rendered doubly formidable by the possession of youth, and a purity of life, and a zeal for the reformation of morals, which in those corrupt times, qualified him in an eminent degree for the office of censor of kings and courts.

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[1] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 272.; Collier, vol. ii. p. 340.; Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 81. 84.

Innocent professed to be a great admirer of archbishop Becket; and the leading principle of his government, as expressed in his own language, is very similar to what we have before quoted from that prelate's letters to Henry II.: "As the sun and the moon are placed in the firmament, the greater as the light of the day, and the lesser of the night, thus are there two powers in the Church: the pontifical, which, as having the charge of souls, is the greater; and the royal, which is the less, and to which the bodies of men only are entrusted." In pursuance of this principle, Innocent endeavoured to make himself the arbiter of quarrels among the princes of Europe, on the pretence that it was his province to judge where sin was committed, and to proceed against the offender, whoever he might be. By a threat of an interdict, he compelled the observance of peace between the kings of Castile and Portugal. He excommunicated the usurper of the crown of Norway. Because the king of Hungary had detained one of his legates, he threatened to prevent his son's succession to the throne. The kingdom of Leon was subjected to an interdict, because its sovereign had married within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity. The same dreadful weapon was launched against the kingdom of France, because Philip Augustus had repudiated his wife Isemburga, princess of Denmark, and married another woman. Even this powerful monarch, the most able and accomplished of European sovereigns, was compelled to submit to the arms of Innocent, and take back his divorced spouse.[1] The Pope's contest with John, which did not begin till some years afterwards, took its origin from the conflicting claims of the suffragan bishops of the province of Canterbury and the monks of Christchurch to fill up the vacancy of the archiepiscopal see.

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[1] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 277—282.; Lingard, vol. iii. p. 1. note to p. 11.

Archbishop Hubert died in 1205, and immediately after his death the junior part of the monks assembled by night, without the king's license, and chose Reginald their subprior to be archbishop, and, having chanted the Te Deum, placed him on the archiepiscopal throne.

Reginald was then sent off to Rome with some of the monks, to obtain confirmation from the Pope, having been first bound by oath not to divulge the fact of the election without permission from the convent. Notwithstanding this obligation, vanity so far overcame his discretion, that he had no sooner landed in Flanders, than he announced himself as archbishop elect of Canterbury. When this fact was known to the monks who remained in England, they were highly indignant at the conduct of the subprior, and immediately sent to request the king's permission to proceed in due form to an election. John readily granted their petition, recommending at the same time for their choice John de Gray, bishop of Norwich, who was accordingly elected and enthroned as archbishop by the monks, and invested by the king with the temporalities of the see. In the following year, the king sent Elias de Brantfield and some others of the monks to Rome, to obtain from the Pope the confirmation of the second election. The suffragan bishops of the province of Canterbury sent their agents at the same time to complain to the Pope of the election having been made without their concurrence, to set forth the grounds on which their claim to assist at this formality rested, and to give evidence of the fact of their having actually concurred in the election of three metropolitans. On the other hand, the monks urged that by special privilege, and according to the more ancient method of holding the election of an archbishop, they had been accustomed to elect to the office without the suffragans. On the 21st of December, 1206, Innocent gave his definitive decision, whereby he imposed silence on the bishops with respect to their supposed right, and decreed that in future the monks of Christchurch should elect an archbishop without them. He had next to determine the question of the double election, upon which the monks were divided among themselves, some contending for the validity of Reginald's claim, and others supporting that of John de Gray. Both of these elections were set aside as null and void: the subprior's, because it was irregular in form; that of the bishop of Norwich, because it took place before the other was formally annulled.

A new election now became necessary, a circumstance which seems to have been anticipated by the king, as he had bound those members of the chapter whom he had sent to Rome, by an oath, that they would choose no other than the bishop of Norwich. The Pope, however, would not hear of that prelate, as he had already fixed upon a very different person as the future archbishop. The object of his choice was Stephen Langton, a man of distinguished learning, an Englishman by birth, who had been a prebendary of York, and chancellor of the University of Paris; and had been afterwards raised to the dignity of a cardinal priest by Innocent himself. When Langton's name was first suggested by the Pope to the monks who were in Rome, they demurred, on the ground of the want of the king's consent, and the absence of their brethren. Innocent, in a letter to John, written after the election, states that messengers were actually sent to ask for his consent, but that they were detained at Dover, and prevented from fulfilling their mission.[1] In the meantime, he persuaded the monks that the licence of the sovereign was not necessary for an election made at Rome, and that their number was quite sufficient to make the proceeding valid; and concluded with enjoining them, by virtue of their obedience, and under a threat of an anathema, to choose Langton. Such arguments, so enforced, of necessity prevailed; the whole body of the monks of Canterbury who were at Rome, with the exception of Elias de Brantfield, concurred (notwithstanding their oath to John) in the election of Langton as archbishop; and he was consecrated by the Pope himself at Viterbo, on the 17th of June, 1207.

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[1] Wendover, vol. ii. p. 243.

Innocent's next object was to reconcile John to this proceeding. He began with sending him a present of four rings, set with different precious stones, and accompanied with a letter explaining the allegorical nature of the gift. Their roundness was a type of eternity; the number four, a square number, was to denote firmness of mind based on the four principal virtues,—justice, fortitude, prudence, and temperance. The stones themselves also were significant emblems of different virtues,—the greenness of the emerald representing faith; the clearness of the sapphire, hope; the redness of the garnet, charity; the purity of the topaz, good works. The present was followed by a letter from the Pope, formally announcing the election of Langton, whose virtues and learning he highly praised, and requesting John in mild and persuasive terms to receive him as primate. The king was greatly enraged at hearing this news, and with some justice complained of the double dealing of the monks, whom he resolved at once to visit with his vengeance. Two knights were ordered to repair to Canterbury with a body of armed men, and expel the brethren from the monastery. The order was obeyed with the utmost rigour: the prior and monks were compelled to flee from the kingdom; some brethren of the order of St. Augustine were placed in the convent to perform their religious duties, while their property was confiscated by the king's officers.

Having vented his wrath in this unmanly and illegal manner upon enemies who were too weak to resist him, John proceeded to send a letter of defiance to the Pope, complaining that he had annulled the election of the bishop of Norwich, and consecrated Langton, without his consent. He declared to Innocent that he would stand up for the rights of his crown, if necessary, even unto death, and that he would not be deterred from the election and promotion of the bishop of Norwich ; and he added threats that he would retaliate upon the Pope, by not permitting either his subjects or their money to pass from England to Rome. The Pope replied mildly, but did not omit the opportunity of asserting that he acted in this matter as the vicar of Him "to whom every knee is bent in heaven, on earth, and under the earth ;" and concluded with a hint of the "danger of resisting God and the Church, for which the blessed martyr and glorious high-priest Thomas recently shed his blood." After some time had elapsed, and it appeared that his warnings produced no effect, he ordered the bishops of London, Ely, and Worcester to wait upon the king, and urge him, under the threat of an interdict, to receive the archbishop of Canterbury, and to recal the monks to their church.[1]

This device of punishing a whole nation by forbidding the celebration of the ordinances of religion, was a contrivance unknown to the Church for many ages, but it had become in the 11th and 12th centuries a matter of not unfrequent occurrence ; and, certainly, a more detestable instrument of tyranny can hardly be conceived than this unrighteous policy, of visiting the sins of the guilty upon the innocent, which was so readily adopted in these ages by those who presumed to call themselves Christ's vicars. The effect of an interdict was, to put an end for the time being to all public services in the churches, to suspend nearly all the ordinary offices of religion, and to reduce a Christian country in outward appearance to a state of heathenism.

Such was the scourge which the three bishops were ordered to inflict upon unoffending England, because its sovereign had refused to submit to an intolerable outrage upon his own authority and the constitutional laws of the realm, perpetrated by the Pope without a shadow of justice. The arguments which these prelates addressed to the king, though urged with humility and even with tears, produced no effect, except to excite him to a fury of indignation against the Pontiff.

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[1] Wendover, vol. ii. pp. 215—245.

To the threat of an interdict, he replied by threatening to send off the English bishops and clergy to Rome and confiscate their property: he added menaces of the most savage cruelty against any of the Pope's clergy who might be found in England, and concluded with hastily ordering the three prelates out of his presence. Finding that they could not move him to change his purpose, they proceeded to publish the interdict on the morning of the Monday in Passion Week, 1208. It was obeyed at once: and, immediately, the bells of the churches ceased to sound; the voice of prayer and praise was no longer heard in them; all the ordinary services, except the baptism of infants and the absolution of the dying, were stopped; the dead were buried in roads and ditches, without prayers or any attendance of a priest. The only mitigation of the extreme severity of the sentence was, that sermons might be delivered on the Sundays in the churchyards, and marriages be solemnised in the porches of the churches.[1] Afterwards Langton procured, as a special favour, for the conventual churches, that they should have the privilege of performing divine service once in the week.

The three prelates having published the interdict, secretly left the kingdom, together with the bishops of Bath and Hereford. Upon this, John vented his rage upon their relatives, who, without any form of law, were seized, plundered, and thrown into prison. His next step was to attack the clergy for obeying the interdict. Orders were sent to the sheriffs and other officers to confiscate their property, and to force them to leave the country. In many cases, however, the bishops and abbots refused to give up possession of their monasteries unless expelled by force: and after a time the persecution so far abated, that they were allowed to receive a small support out of the proceeds of the lands.

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[1] Lingard, vol. iii. p. 21. note.

In the second year of the interdict, the king still continuing obstinate in his resistance, Innocent issued a sentence of excommunication against him. The three bishops before mentioned were ordered to publish the anathema every Sunday and feast-day in all the conventual churches of the country; but, being afraid to come to England, they entrusted the publication of it to their brethren who remained at home. These, again, durst not fulfil the Pope's commands for fear of the king; and so the sentence remained unpublished, though it was known and formed a subject of general conversation. So sensitive, however, was John with respect to this matter, that, because the archdeacon of Norwich had been heard to say, that it was not safe for beneficed persons to retain their allegiance to an excommunicated king, the unfortunate man was thrown into prison by the king's orders, and a cap of lead was placed on his head, a piece of cruelty which caused his death.[1]

In the meantime the king affected to despise the interdict, and proceeded with his expeditions against the Irish, the Scotch, and the Welsh, as though nothing had happened.

Three of the bishops still supported him, namely, John of Norwich, whom he had tried to make primate, and the bishops of Durham and Winchester; and one Alexander, surnamed Cæmentarius, openly preached against the Pope's supremacy being extended to temporal things or persons.

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[1] Wendover, vol. ii. pp. 246, 250.

Notwithstanding this, John made a show of being willing to terminate the quarrel, by receiving the Pope's envoys, who came to negotiate with him: he was even prepared to permit Langton and the other proscribed bishops and monks to return to their country; although he refused to make any compensation for the loss of property which they had sustained. He knew that the sentence of excommunication would probably be followed by one of deposition, and against this he was willing to adopt every measure of precaution. If the report of the cotemporary historian[1] is to be believed, he even offered to turn Mussulman for the purpose of securing an alliance with a Mohammedan prince against the attacks of the Pope.

According to the feudal notions of the age, with which Innocent's claims of temporal supremacy were made to agree, princes were supposed by their disobedience to become traitors to God, and by their treason to forfeit the kingdoms which they held as fees of God; and to pronounce sentence of forfeiture in such cases was the prerogative of the Pontiff, as the pretended vicegerent of Christ.[2] When, in 1212, after the interdict had lasted four years, Langton, together with the bishops of London and Ely, solemnly demanded justice of the Pope against John for all his enormities, Innocent no longer hesitated to depose him from the royal dignity. He absolved all the king's subjects and vassals from their obligations of allegiance and fealty: he offered the kingdom of England to Philip Augustus of France, and exhorted that prince to undertake the execution of the sentence of deposition for the remission of his own sins: he invited all Christian princes and nobles to assume the Cross, and follow the French king as their leader, and assist in dethroning the enemy of the Church; and he promised the same immunities to all who would engage in so holy an expedition, as were granted to pilgrims going to the Holy Sepulchre.

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[1] Matt. Paris, cited by Giles, Wendover, vol. ii. p. 283.

[2] Lingard, vol. iii. p. 28. note.

Philip Augustus (who had already obtained possession of nearly all John's continental dominions) was not unwilling to have an excuse for an enterprise so suitable to his ambitious views; and accordingly, in the spring of 1213, he assembled a considerable force for the invasion of England. John, on the other hand, was not slack in his preparations for defence. With the powerful fleet and army which he had under his command, he might, had he been faithful to his trust, have defended his country against any foes. As it was, he gave an instance of cowardice and treachery unexampled in the history of England.

While he was at Dover preparing for the expected invasion, he received, through two of the Knights Templars, a message from the subdeacon Pandulph, a confidential agent of the Pope. This person had recently accompanied the English bishops on their journey from Rome into France, and, having before his departure received private instructions from Innocent, he now sought an interview with John to propose terms of peace in the Pontiff's name. The interview being granted, Pandulph endeavoured to work upon John's fears by magnifying the power of the French king, who was commissioned by the Apostolic see to expel him from his kingdom as an enemy of God and the Pope: he intimated in plain language that the enterprise was encouraged by promises of support from the English nobles; and he told him that the only way of saving his kingdom was to submit to the Papal see. His arguments had great weight with a man of John's pusillanimous disposition, who knew that he had caused the deepest offence to his barons by sundry acts of oppression and licentiousness; whose conscience, moreover, told him that he had richly deserved the judgments of heaven both in this world and in the next; and who naturally dreaded the consequences of remaining longer in a state of exclusion from the ordinances of the Church. His superstitious fears had been still further excited by the prophecy of one Peter, a hermit, that before the feast of Ascension Day, which was close at hand, he would have ceased to reign.

Under the influence of these feelings, after some struggles of mind, on the 13th of May, 1213, John subscribed a charter, which was guaranteed by the oaths of four of his principal barons, the chief articles of which were as follows. He promised to abide by the commands of the Pope, in all the matters for which he had been excommunicated by him; to admit Langton in peace to the archbishopric of Canterbury, and to restore the other proscribed bishops, as well as the exiled clergy and laity, and the monks of Christchurch, to their privileges and property, the archbishop and bishops giving security that they would attempt nothing against his crown or person. He further promised that all the clergy and laity, then in prison on account of the late quarrel, should be released; that the exiles should be indemnified for their losses, a sum specified being paid down to each of the prelates and to the monks of Canterbury, by way of partial satisfaction of their claims under this head; that all sentences of outlawry pronounced against any person should be revoked; and that no such sentence should be pronounced against the clergy in future. Upon the performance of these conditions, the interdict was to be withdrawn from the kingdom.

Two days afterwards, *i. e.* on the day before Ascension Day, the king again met Pandulph at the house of the Knights Templars near Dover, and there, in the presence of the archbishop of Dublin, the bishop of Norwich, and several of his chief barons, he executed another instrument of a very different character. By this he testified, that "having in many things offended God and his mother the holy Church, and not having wherewithal to make a worthy offering as an atonement to God, and to pay the just demands of the Church, unless he humbled himself before Him who humbled Himself for us, even unto death," he did, of his own free will and consent, and not by force or from fear of the interdict, and by the general advice of his barons, grant to God and His Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and to the Holy Church of Rome, and to Pope Innocent and his Catholic successors, the kingdoms of England and Ireland, to be holden of the Pope and the Church of Rome, by the annual payment of a thousand marks, in addition to the Peter's pence, viz. seven hundred marks for England, and three hundred for Ireland; reserving to himself the rights, privileges, and customs of the crown. Having signed this charter, which professed to bind his heirs and successors in like manner, he proceeded to take the vassal's oath of fealty to the Pope in the usual form. He swore that he would be faithful to God, St. Peter, the Church of Rome, and his liege lord Pope Innocent and his Catholic successors; that he would not, by act, word, or consent, abet their enemies, to the loss of life, limb, or liberty; that he would prevent any damage being done to them if he knew of it, and, if in his power, repair it; that he would keep their counsel secret, and never disclose it to their injury; and that he would assist in defending the inheritance of St. Peter, and particularly the kingdoms of England and Ireland, against all men, to the utmost of his power. Having stooped to this humiliation, John spent the following day in anxious fear, on account of its being the period fixed by the prophecy of the hermit. As soon as it was passed, he gave orders for the immediate execution of the unfortunate man, though, as the cotemporary historian observes, the circumstances that happened the day before seemed to verify the prediction.[1]

This act of surrender has branded the name of John with infamy, and is generally considered by Protestant writers to mark the period at which the Papal supremacy attained its greatest height in England. Dr. Lingard, the learned and eloquent Roman Catholic historian, admitting the disgraceful nature of the transaction, has attempted to palliate it by representing, first, that we must judge of its character by the ideas of vassalage which prevailed in the 13th century, that state being then not considered as degrading; and, secondly, that the blame of the surrender ought to be shared by the barons, the very men who afterwards extorted from John the concession of Magna Charta. The first of these pleas is supported chiefly by reference to the homage paid by the king of Scotland to the king of England, and by the latter to the king of France for his continental dominions; and to the case of a king of Arragon, who, not long before, had voluntarily become the vassal of Innocent III. It is obvious, however, that none of these instances, except the last, is at all parallel to that of John. The king of Scotland was taken prisoner by Henry II., and, to escape from confinement, submitted to vassalage, as the lesser evil of the two. The dukes of Normandy were, to almost all intents and purposes, independent princes; it is clear, at all events, that no king of France would or could have ventured to treat such vassals as William the Conqueror, or either of the Henries, in the manner in which Innocent treated John. With respect to the second plea, it seems probable that the barons consented to the act for the express purpose of humbling a tyrant whom they abhorred, and with a view to their own ulterior objects. But whatever their motives may have been, and however objectionable their conduct, it is difficult to believe that they intended that the surrender should operate as a bonâ fide transaction; neither was it so regarded by any of John's successors, except perhaps those whose weakness rendered them incapable of effectually resisting Papal encroachments.[1] The annual payment of a thousand marks appears to have been made occasionally, according as the interests of the sovereign may have inclined him to desire the friendship of the Pope, up to so late a period as the seventeenth year of Edward I., when it ceased. Whether the arrears were (as has been stated) afterwards paid up by so feeble a prince as Edward II. is a question comparatively immaterial. It is an indisputable fact that the payment was formally demanded of Edward III., in 1366, by Pope Urban V., after a long discontinuance, with the addition of something like a threat in case of non-payment. That high-minded prince referred the matter to the consideration of his parliament: and the lords spiritual and temporal, with the assent of the commons, unanimously declared that neither John, nor any other person, could subject the kingdom to another, without the consent of the nation; that the act was done without the consent of the realm, and was contrary to the tenor of his coronation oath. The lay lords and the commons also resolved that, if the Pope attempted to enforce his claim by process of law, or by any other means, they would resist him to the utmost of their power.[1]

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[1] Wendover, vol. ii. pp. 258—270.

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[1] Lingard, vol. iii. pp. 34, 35.

Pandulph, having obtained from John the written evidence of his submission, returned to France to prevent the French king from invading England. Notwithstanding this, the two countries continued to be in a state of war with each other, and John was preparing soon afterwards to invade France in his turn, when he met with an unexpected refusal from his nobles to follow an excommunicated prince. This obliged him to take some steps to fulfil his engagements to the exiled bishops and clergy, which he would probably otherwise have sought to evade. In consequence of an invitation from the king, guaranteed by twenty-four of the barons, Langton and the other exiled prelates, together with the monks of Canterbury, and others who had been banished on account of the interdict, landed at Dover, on the 16th of

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[1] Lingard, vol. iv. pp. 146, 147.; Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 282, note.

July, 1213. The bishops then proceeded to Winchester; and there, after John had prostrated himself before them with the utmost humiliation, solemnly absolved him in the usual form. On this occasion, he renewed his oath of fealty to the Pope and his successors, and swore moreover that he would renew all the good laws of his ancestors, especially those of king Edward the Confessor, that he would annul bad ones, that he would judge his subjects according to the just decrees of his courts, and that he would restore to each his rights. This oath was dictated by Langton, but its meaning was not well understood, until the events which followed developed more completely the views and intentions of the primate. The interdict still continued in force, notwithstanding the king's absolution. At length, about Michaelmas in the same year, the bishop of Tusculum came over to England as the Pope's legate, to arrange the settlement of the compensation to be paid to the exiled clergy, and soon afterwards received a commission from Innocent to fill up some of the vacant churches. In the execution of this office, he was charged with favouring the king's wishes too much, and on this account was opposed by Langton, who appealed to the Pope against his proceedings, as derogatory to the dignity of the metropolitan see. And here we have to remark a change in the Papal policy; for, on this occasion, we find Innocent, who had hitherto supported the bishops against the king, now taking the king's part against the bishops, and slighting the primate's appeal. A similar tendency was observable in the agreement for compensation to the exiles, the terms of which, after much discussion, were settled by the Pope himself, in a manner much more favourable to the king than strict equity demanded. When all was at length arranged, the legate revoked the interdict at St. Paul's Cathedral, on the 29th of June, 1214, amidst the ringing of bells and the chanting of the Te Deum, after it had continued in force more than six years. Before this legate John once more repeated the oath of fealty which he had taken in the presence of Pandulph and also before the primate, and did homage to him as the representative of the Pontiff.[1]

Having made this dishonourable submission (as the cotemporary historian justly calls it) to the Pope, the king had next to learn a lesson of compliance with the just demands of his own barons. The details of the contest between them, which lasted through the remainder of this reign, belong for the most part to civil history. It is worth while however to remark, that the person who took the lead in those proceedings which ended in the concession of Magna Charta by John was archbishop Langton, who had been appointed to his see by the Pope. He it was who obliged the king to swear that he would restore the laws of Edward the Confessor; he it was who taught the barons the nature of the charter of Henry I., in which those laws were supposed to be embodied; and who acted as mediator between them and the king in all the negotiations which followed. Even when the Pope afterwards issued a general excommunication against the barons, Langton, being ordered to publish the sentence, made an excuse for not complying with the order, and, on account of this refusal, was suspended from all spiritual functions by the Papal commissioners. The suspension was confirmed by Innocent himself at the great Council of Lateran, held at Rome in 1215, at which Langton was present; and, though it was afterwards taken off, the primate was not allowed to return again to England during John's reign.[2]

The change in the Papal policy towards John was followed, naturally, by a change in the king's policy towards the Church. With the object of gaining over the clergy to his side against the barons, he granted by charter, to the cathedral and monastic chapters, that right of free election for which they had so strenuously contended, and which he himself, as well as his predecessors, had hitherto so fiercely opposed.

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[1] Wendover, vol. ii. pp. 273—276. 289—297.

[2] Ibid. passim. pp. 276. —359.

This charter, which was confirmed by the Pope, required the electors to ask the king's permission before they proceeded to fill up a vacant see; but, if this were refused, they might make a canonical election without it. They were also required to present the person chosen to the king for his approbation, which he undertook not to withhold, except for some legitimate reason.[1]

This charter is referred to and confirmed by Magna Charta, which was signed on the 15th of June, 1215, and the first article of which declares "that the Church of England shall be a free Church, and keep its laws entire and its liberties uninfringed," and that "the liberty of elections is considered to be of the greatest importance and most necessary to the English Church."[2] The concession of this celebrated instrument was wrung from John by necessity, and the event soon showed that he would not keep faith with his people with respect to its provisions. Such was the degradation to which he stooped, that he did not scruple to appeal to Innocent, as his liege lord, against the acts of his own barons, and obtain from him a decree, by which the Pontiff presumed, as one who had received power from heaven "to pluck up and destroy, to build and to plant," to annul the Great Charter altogether. No attention being paid to this by the refractory nobles, the Pope proceeded first to issue a general sentence of excommunication against them, and then to excommunicate them by name, and place the city of London under an interdict.[3] They, on the other hand, contended that the Pope's authority did not extend to lay affairs, which had not been intrusted by our Lord to Peter and his successors; and through their energy and decision the Great Charter finally prevailed, in spite of all the

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[1] Matt. Paris, cited in Giles's Wendover, vol. ii. pp. 324, 325.

[2] Wendover, vol. ii. p. 310.

[3] Ibid. pp. 329—334. 353—356.

Papal weapons directed against it. In the summer of 1216 Innocent was removed by death, and John did not long survive him. In the reign of Henry III., the Charter was more than once solemnly confirmed, and additional securities granted; and though often violated by that prince, as by his successors, this great statute has remained, to after ages, a fundamental law of that constitution of England in Church and State which we so justly prize as the greatest of national blessings.

CHAP. XVIII.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND DURING THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES, FROM THE DEATH OF JOHN TO THE AGE OF WYCLIFFE.

The four reigns which followed the inglorious reign of John, extending over a period of more than a century and a half, witnessed the development of the principles of the Great Charter, by the establishment of the political constitution of England in that parliamentary form which has ever distinguished this country among the nations of Europe. The same period also beheld a system of constant encroachments, on the part of the Popes, upon the ecclesiastical rights of the English sovereign and people; met by a resistance, not, indeed, always equally determined and consistent, but which was so far crowned with success, that in the latter half of the 14th century the nation was completely freed from the trammels fastened upon it by king John. The extreme corruption of the Papal system, and the progress of knowledge and education during the same century, in some degree prepared men's minds for the commencement of a religious revolution, the first seeds of which were long before its close sown by the celebrated John Wycliffe.

The materials for the ecclesiastical history of England, during the century and a half which followed the death of John, seem properly to range themselves under three heads. I propose, therefore, in the present chapter to consider the English Church of that period, first, in its relation to the see of Rome, with a sketch of the Papal encroachments upon its rights, and the rise of the Mendicant orders; secondly, in its domestic and political state, with reference to the civil condition, privileges, mode of government, legal rights and disabilities, of the clergy; and, thirdly, in its internal state with reference to doctrine and discipline.

I. 1. The concession by John to the chapters of freedom of episcopal elections was soon found to be of very little advantage to those bodies. Instead of putting a stop to the abuse of royal nominations, it had in the end the contrary effect. The Pope now assumed the right of annulling at his own pleasure the election of the chapters. In consequence of this, if the sovereign wanted to procure or prevent an episcopal appointment, he no longer paid court to the monastic or capitular bodies, to whom the right of election belonged, but to the Pontiff, who possessed the power of setting aside the choice of the chapter, and who thereby virtually had the appointment of the prelates in his own hands. We have seen how the exercise of this Papal prerogative led to Stephen Langton's elevation to the primacy; and the same power was used, in the latter part of John's reign, when Langton had fallen out of favour with the court of Rome, to prevent his brother Simon from being made archbishop of York.[1] Upon Langton's death, the person chosen by the monks of Canterbury to succeed him was set aside by the Pope, in consideration of a promise of pecuniary aid from the king of England, and one nominated by the king was appointed instead. On the next vacancy of the see of Canterbury, three successive elections of the chapter were annulled, and Edmund Rich appointed on the Pope's recommendation.[2] In the same reign, of Henry III., we find one instance in which the Pope set aside an election to the see of Winchester to please the king, and another in which he confirmed the appointment of the king's half-brother to the same see, notwithstanding his being under the canonical age. So little, in fact, was there of freedom of election in Henry's reign, that a deputation of bishops actually went to remonstrate with him against the violation of this article of the charter, and were rebuked by the king for their interference.[3] In Edward I.'s reign Kilwardby and Peckham were successively appointed to the primacy by the Pope; and, under

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[1] Wendover, p. 347.

[2] Collier, vol. ii. pp. 466—469.

[3] Ibid. pp. 487. 526. 529.

Edward II., archbishop Reynolds owed his elevation to the exercise of the same power, though at the request of the king. Even Edward III., the most powerful and high-spirited of the Plantagenet princes, was not ashamed to call in the aid of the Papal authority for the appointment of archbishops Stratford, Ufford, and Langham; and, in fact, all the appointments to the primacy during this long reign were made either directly by the Pope, or through his intervention.[1] The same period, which witnessed the success of the Popes in obtaining so complete a control over the episcopal appointments, seems also to have given them another cause for triumph, in the establishment of the practice of bishops binding themselves by an oath of fidelity to the Papal see. A form of such an oath was originally framed by Gregory VII., but was not generally received; but that of Gregory IX., which was put forth in 1236, was required to be taken by every bishop at his consecration, and the same form with some variations continued in use through the 14th and 15th centuries.[2]

Although it suited the purposes of the English sovereigns to make frequent use of the assistance of the Popes, in order to obtain the appointment of such prelates as they desired, they would not permit the Papal interference with episcopal elections to operate to the prejudice of the temporal rights of the crown. Thus when Boniface VIII., in Edward I.'s reign, in appointing to the see of Worcester, assumed the right of disposing of the temporalities of that see, the attempt met with a determined resistance on the part of that king and his ministers. The bishop elect in this case was obliged, before he was allowed to do homage to the king for his temporalities, to renounce by a formal instrument every clause in the Papal bull, pretending to confer the bishopric upon him, which might be prejudicial to the rights of the crown, and to acknowledge that he could receive the temporalities from no one but the king; and, in addition to this, he was fined a thousand marks.[1] From this time such a renunciation was constantly required of all who obtained similar Papal instruments in their favour; and even a legate of the Pope, when appointed to the see of Winchester, was subjected to the same compulsion.

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[1] Collier, vol. ii. pp. 570. 575.; vol. iii. pp. 9. 64. 108. 128.

[2] Lewis's Life of Bishop Pecock, pp. 84—89.

2. The grievance which formed the most frequent subject of complaint in the period of which we write, was the interference of the Popes with the right of patronage of inferior benefices, by what were called Provisions. This abuse began, during the popedom of Adrian IV., with a request from the Pontiff, to certain bishops, to confer the next benefice that should become vacant on a particular clerk. These letters of request or recommendation were known by the name of Mandats; and, according to the natural progress of usurpation, led in the course of time to a claim of right. A request, addressed to the English bishops in 1226 by Honorius III., that two prebends in every cathedral church might be kept for the Holy see, does not appear to have led to any result; but his successors contrived to establish the practice of providing their clerks, by means of mandats, with the best benefices in the English Church. The Popes had already, for some time, claimed the patronage of all benefices which came vacant *in curiâ*, as it was called, that is, while the incumbents were at Rome; and the number of these, from various causes, was probably considerable. This claim was formally asserted by a bull of Clement IV. in 1266, and again, not many years afterwards, by another bull of Boniface VIII., and at length extended, by Clement V., so as to declare that the disposal of all ecclesiastical benefices belonged to the Pope as universal patron. The consequence of this doctrine was, that reversionary grants or provisions might be made during the lives of

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[1] Collier, vol. ii. p. 619.; Lingard, vol. iv. p. 150.

the incumbents; and, in some instances, the patronage was reserved specifically to the Pope. At the same time the canons against pluralities and non-residence were relaxed in order to give permission to Italians to hold several preferments in England together; and it has been stated that there were instances of as many as fifty or sixty benefices being held by the same person.[1]

It may seem to be an instance of extraordinary presumption, on the part of the Popes, that they could suppose that such an abuse would be quietly endured by a high-spirited people; but the acquiescence of the nation in the submission of John may have led the Pontiffs to overrate their power of enforcing obedience to their commands. Nevertheless, a remonstrance was conveyed to the Papal court, on the part of the English barons, as early as 1239, against the violation of their rights of patronage. The occasion of this complaint was the rejection, by the archbishop of York, at the Pope's order, of a clergyman, who was presented to a benefice by one Sir Robert Thuinge, and, with respect to the individual case, the mission was successful. On the other hand, we find that, in 1245, the evil still remained unabated. At a council held in that year, by Innocent IV. at Lyons, the English envoys presented a strong remonstrance in the name of their nation against various abuses, and, in particular, against the practice of the Popes in the intrusion upon their Church of foreign priests, unable to understand their language, who drew from its revenues a sum of from sixty to seventy thousand marks.[2] Nor were the clergy less vehement in their opposition to the abuse than the laity. The celebrated Grosstête, who was bishop of Lincoln in Henry III.'s reign, declared, in a letter to the Pope, that, the authority assigned to the Holy see by our Saviour being for edification and not for destruction, and provisions having a manifest tendency to destruction, he felt himself bound by obligations of duty to reject the Papal orders in this respect, as being a plain contradiction to the Catholic faith and the sanctity of the Apostolic see.[1] Notwithstanding these remonstrances, nothing was done to diminish the abuse of provisions during the 13th century. Henry III. was too mean-spirited to resist the Pope, and Edward I. did not scruple to avail himself of Papal provisions, in order to reward his own chaplains.[2] In 1307, the parliament assembled at Carlisle remonstrated strongly against this and other means of Papal extortion, but passed no statute on the subject.[3] In 1343, the Pope having charged a provision of two thousand marks upon the next vacant benefices, the agents who came to collect the money were ordered by Edward III. to quit the kingdom on pain of imprisonment; and the king, at the same time, addressed to the Pope a dignified, temperate, but decided demand for redress, All remonstrances availing nothing, at length, in 1350, the parliament passed what is commonly called the Statute of Provisors, by which it was declared that, if the Pope collated to any bishopric, dignity, or benefice, the patronage for that turn should pass to the king; and persons procuring reservations and provisions from the Pope were made liable to fine and imprisonment.[4] This was followed by a more stringent act, the object of which was to prevent causes relating to provisions being drawn into the Papal courts. Still the evil of provisions remained without any material diminution, and, in Richard II.'s reign, it was found necessary to guard against the Papal interference with the right of patronage, by still more severe enactments, the chief of which is commonly known by the name of the Statute of Premunire, from the first word of the writ, by which the execution of this and the other laws on the same subject was enforced. This statute, after declaring, "that the crown of England had been always so free and independent as not to have any earthly sovereign, but to be immediately subject to God in all things touching its prerogatives and royalty," enacts, that whoever procures at Rome, or elsewhere, any translations, processes, excommunications, bulls, instruments, or other things, which touch the king, against him, his crown, or realm, and all persons aiding and assisting therein, shall be put out of the king's protection, and that their lands and goods shall be forfeited to the king's use, and that they shall be attached by their bodies to answer to the king and his council.[1] Even this strong measure, though partially successful, and so obnoxious to the court of Rome as to be called by a Pope "an execrable statute," was not sufficient to do away with an abuse so inveterate and so powerfully sanctioned as that of provisions.

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[1] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. pp. 300—304.

[2] Collier, vol. ii. pp. 489. 507.; Lingard, vol. iii. pp. 106, 107.

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[1] Collier, vol. ii. p. 531. His words were; "Filialiter et obedienter non obedio."

[2] Lingard, vol. iv. p. 151, note.

[3] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 338.

[4] Collier, vol. iii. pp. 113. 115.

3. The excuse generally alleged for provisions was the necessity of the Pontiffs, who, more especially after their departure from Rome to Avignon, had no other means of rewarding their immediate adherents, than by quartering them on foreign countries: and a similar necessity might be pleaded for the Papal demands upon the clergy in the shape of tallages or taxes. The practice of requiring these contributions seems to have begun with Innocent III., who, in 1199, imposed upon all the clergy a tribute of one fortieth of moveable estate, for the purpose of a crusade. Gregory IX., the next Pope but one after Innocent, having excommunicated the German Emperor Frederic II., proclaimed a sort of holy war against him; and to carry this into effect, he laid a tax of a tenth on the Church of England, which was enforced with the utmost rigour. Against this impost the clergy remonstrated, the barons threatened stronger measures, but the pusillanimity of Henry III. prevented the opposition from producing any important results. In this respect, the weaker

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[1] Blackstone, vol. iv. p. 112.; Collier, vol. iii. pp. 209, 210.

kingdom of Scotland showed an example of greater courage, by refusing permission to the Papal legate to enter the country for the purpose of levying money.[1]

4. In the beginning of the 14th century, a new species of imposition on the clergy was devised by John XXII., one of the most rapacious of the Avignon Pontiffs, under the name of annates, or first fruits of ecclesiastical benefices. A year's value of these, estimated according to a fixed rate in the books of the Roman chancery, was made payable to the various Papal collectors throughout Europe, at the commencement of every new incumbency, and the exaction continued in England until the Reformation.[2]

5. Notwithstanding all these encroachments of the Popes, and the consequent dependence of the bishops upon the Papal power, to which they owed their own appointments, the nation certainly, upon the whole, learned during the 13th century to assume a more manly and independent tone towards the see of Rome than before. The most remarkable instance of this spirit was shown by Robert Grosstête, bishop of Lincoln, whose letter to Pope Innocent IV., on the subject of provisions, has been before mentioned. The learning of this eminent man was much above the ordinary standard of his age, inasmuch as he was well acquainted with Greek, and his zeal and integrity in the administration of his diocese entitle him to our highest respect, especially when we consider the decay of discipline which generally prevailed among the clergy and the obstacles which the corruption of the Papal court opposed to any reformation. In the earlier part of his career, he was a great admirer of the mendicant orders of friars, then, perhaps, at the height of their power and influence, and did not scruple to employ their zeal to provoke the dissolute and slothful clergy of his diocese to more activity and devotion to their duties. Afterwards, he must have changed his

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[1] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 305.

[2] Ibid. p. 336.; Blackstone, vol. i. p. 284.

opinion upon this point; for when two Franciscans demanded, in the name of the Pontiff, six thousand marks from the diocese of Lincoln, the exaction met with the determined opposition of the bishop. Notwithstanding this refusal, he obtained the next year authority, from Pope Innocent IV., to reform the religious orders in his diocese. This led him into a dispute with the monks, who obliged him to appear before the Papal court at Lyons to answer their appeal, on which occasion he had personal experience of the corruption of that tribunal, and felt himself compelled to protest against its enormities.[1]

His resistance to a Papal provision in favour of a nephew of Innocent is said to have provoked that Pope to launch a sentence of excommunication against him, under which he lay till his death.

This story has been questioned[2]; but whether it be true or not, enough has been recorded of this eminent man to show that his principles were such as involved a denial of the Papal infallibility, and of the duty of passive obedience to Rome, and were so far Protestant. Mr. Hallam considers it to be a mistake to reckon Grosstête among the precursors of the Reformation[3]; and, with respect to the mere question of purity of doctrine, perhaps he is right in his judgment. But, on the other hand, the intrepidity with which Grosstête resisted on religious grounds the Papal encroachments, seems fully to entitle him to that honour. He declared that obedience was to be paid to the occupants of the Roman see, unless any of them commanded what was contrary to the commands of Christ, in which case to obey was to separate one's self from Christ. The Pope's directions, when contrary to the Catholic faith, were to be refused on the score of duty, and out of deference to the person by whom they were sent; and such disobedience was not contumacy, but a filial respect. Acting upon these principles, he did not scruple to lay bare the abuses of the Papal court with a fearless hand, and his example in this respect must have had great weight with his cotemporaries, as we know that it had, in the next century, upon Wycliffe.[1] It is certain that the nobles of the 13th century partook, notwithstanding their want of education, of the same spirit of independence, and such a submission as that of John to Innocent III. would have been in this age impossible. Edward I. (as we have seen) paid no regard during the latter part of his reign to the acknowledgment of the feudal relation to the Papal see, which John had imposed on his successors; and when a similar right over Scotland was asserted by Boniface VIII., to prevent Edward from obtaining possession of that country, the English barons rejected the Papal claim with the utmost indignation.[2]

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[1] Le Bas's Life of Wiclif, pp. 54–58.

[2] Lingard, vol. iii. p. 180, note.

[3] Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 305, note.

6. During Henry III.'s reign the Pope's legates twice held national synods, in England, viz., Cardinal Otho in 1237, and Cardinal Othobon in 1268.[3] Although Otho came at the invitation of the king, he was expressly forbidden to make any constitutions to the prejudice of the crown; and so little did he confide in the respect of the clergy for his character as Papal ambassador, that he requested a guard for the protection of his person during the sittings of the council. The latter synod was attended, it is said, by bishops from Wales, Scotland, and Ireland; and its canons, which in part are only a repetition of Otho's, have, notwithstanding the foreign authority from which they were derived, always been held in high esteem in the Church. A valuable commentary upon the constitutions of these synods was written by John Athon, canon of Lincoln in the 14th century, and several of them have remained in force since the Reformation, and still form

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[1] Collier, vol. ii. p. 531.; Lingard, vol. iii. p. 179, note.

[2] Lingard, vol. iii. p. 233.

[3] Johnson's Canons, vol. ii. pp. 147. 211.

part of the ecclesiastical law of England. It must be admitted that they deserve praise for attacking vigorously some of the crying abuses which existed in that day, and which have more or less brought reproach upon the Church at all times: as simony, pluralities, non-residence, the appropriation of the revenues of churches, and the practice of holding benefices in commendam. This last practice is said to have originated in times of war and confusion, such as happened at the breaking up of the Western Empire, when a church, deprived of its pastor, was intrusted by the bishop to the care of some clergyman, until a successor could be provided. This temporary provision for a case of necessity, was afterwards converted into a precedent for the abuse of the same person holding permanently, under this name, the revenues of several benefices.[1]

7. Among the Papal encroachments upon the rights of the Church during the 13th century, it seems not out of place to mention the encouragement given by the see of Rome to the mendicant orders, who were thereby rendered the most active and persevering instruments for extending the Pope's dominion in England. The systematic disregard of the vow of poverty by the various branches of the Benedictine order, had long before materially weakened their power over the minds of the vulgar, and a reform of the monastic orders seemed absolutely necessary in order to preserve the principle of the monastic life from being lost altogether. This led, as early as the middle of the 12th century, to the foundation of the first of the mendicant orders, the Carmelites of Palestine, who afterwards passed into Europe, and appeared in England in 1240.[2]

The most celebrated of these orders, however, are those which were founded by Dominic, a noble Spaniard, and Francis of Assisa in Italy (from whom they received the

[1] Collier, vol. ii. pp. 568, 569.

[2] Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 434.

names of Dominicans and Franciscans), and established by Papal authority in 1216 and 1223. "During three centuries" (says Mosheim) "they had the direction of nearly everything in Church and State[1], held the highest offices, both ecclesiastical and civil, taught with almost absolute authority in all the schools and churches, and defended the authority and majesty of the Roman Pontiffs, against kings, bishops, and heretics, with amazing zeal and success." Dominic was a stern fanatic, who, before the establishment of his order, had distinguished himself by his fierce zeal in the crusade against the Albigenses; and from his proceedings in Languedoc that terrible engine of tyranny, the Inquisition, took its origin. The Dominicans were sometimes called preaching friars, from their devotion to that work, and sometimes major friars, to distinguish them from the Franciscans, who were called friars minor; and in England they received the name of black friars, from the colour of their dress. Francis was a pious enthusiast, of a harmless character, but of questionable sanity. Each of these saints preached the necessity of absolute poverty, and enjoined to their disciples the practice of begging for their bread. Numerous other mendicant orders also arose in the same century, but all were suppressed, with the exception of the three just mentioned, and a fourth, called the Augustinian Eremites.[2]

The success of these professors of poverty in the earlier part of their history was most marvellous. Various causes had contributed to weaken the influence of the clergy over the laity in the 13th century; and the mendicant preachers, by their ardent zeal and apparent contempt of worldly things, appeared to realise the vulgar notions of evangelical perfection, and to supply the wants which the sloth and negligence of the parochial clergy left unsatisfied. At the same time, they did not depart in any respect from the Church's standard

[1] Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 523.

[2] Ibid. pp. 523—526.

of faith, but rather professed to exhibit its doctrines in a purer form. Hence their popularity soon became so great as to provoke the jealousy of the parish priests, whose deficiencies seemed to afford an excuse for their mission. The sharp-sighted Pontiffs of that age, which was the noonday of the Papal dominion, foreseeing the support that would thus be given to the Papal authority, gave the mendicants leave to spread themselves everywhere, and invested them with extensive privileges. Without any license from the bishops, they were empowered to preach publicly, to administer the sacraments in all places, to receive confessions, and grant absolution to all who came to them for that purpose, and to inter in their own churches. In 1221, the mendicants found their way into England, and a colony of Dominicans was established at Oxford. Not many years afterwards, the cotemporary historian, Matthew Paris, complains that the parish churches were deserted, and that none would confess except to the friars, to the subversion of the regular discipline.[1] These circumstances naturally rendered them objects of jealousy and dislike to the bishops and clergy, but the extraordinary favour of the Popes bore down all opposition. The excessive austerity of their principles must have been very soon abandoned, for Matthew Paris tells us that, within four and twenty years after their establishment in England, the friars had piled up their mansions to a royal altitude; and were found at the court, in the character of counsellors, and chamberlains, and treasurers, and negociators of marriage, while, as the agents of Papal extortion, they were incessantly applying the arts of flattery, the stings of rebuke, or the terrors of confession.[2]

We find, in Edward I.'s reign, Kilwardby, a Dominican, and Peckham, a Franciscan, successively raised to the primacy of all England; and the latter, even after his elevation, continued to assume, in his archiepiscopal constitutions, the title of Friar John.[1] The exaltation to rank and worldly importance was naturally followed by a relaxation of the rule as to absolute poverty; concerning which, in the case of the Franciscans, the Popes determined that they might enjoy the *use* of property, the ownership of which was declared to be vested in the Roman see. The benefits conferred by the Popes on the mendicant orders were requited by the utmost devotion to the service of their patrons. Many of these monks were eminent as scholars and divines, as, for example, our illustrious countryman, Roger Bacon, a Franciscan, whose devotion to natural sciences caused him to be imprisoned as a magician. The name that was most honoured among the professors of theology and philosophy during the middle ages, was that of the celebrated Dominican, Thomas Aquinas; and it has been observed, that few have gone beyond this renowned divine in the maintenance of extreme views of the Papal supremacy. On the other hand, the support which the friars gave to the Papacy was, in some degree, neutralised by the fierce contests that took place between the rival orders of Francis and Dominic from the first, and also by the divisions of the Franciscans among themselves. The relaxation of the original rule of this order with respect to property caused a resistance on the part of those members who wished to observe it strictly and literally, by living as beggars. These persons formed a separate sect in the 13th century, called Fratricelli, or little brothers, who opposed the decrees of the Popes respecting the affairs of their society, and, by their vehement declamations against the corruptions of the Roman Church, materially assisted in paving the way for the Reformation.[2]

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[1] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 291.

[2] Historia Major, p. 541.

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[1] Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 251. 269.

[2] Mosheim, vol. ii. pp. 530. 538.; Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. pp. 292. 335. note.

Notwithstanding the success of the mendicants as emissaries of the Papacy, the power and influence of the see of Rome visibly declined from the commencement of the 14th century, when the Papal court was removed from Rome to Avignon. Even before this, however, the unprincipled extortions and encroachments of the Popes had caused a wide-spread disaffection among all classes of men. In 1294, the Papal chair was ascended by Boniface VIII., who, with a vanity and presumption that far exceeded the most daring attempts of his predecessors, promulgated the celebrated bull "Unam Sanctam," in which he declared plainly, that the temporal sword of the sovereign must be subject to the spiritual sword of the Pontiff, and that the subjection of every creature to the see of Rome was a necessary article of faith. But Boniface, not aware perhaps of the change in men's minds, had miscalculated his powers, and met with a resistance from the sovereigns both of France and England which was eventually successful. About this time the temporal supremacy of the Popes was strenuously assailed by Occam, a learned English Franciscan, and others, especially the great poet Dante, who seems to have seen in the Babylon of the Apocalypse a type of Papal Rome.[1] Although this claim to temporal supremacy has never been formally repudiated, fewer traces of it occur after the 13th century, and a modern Roman Catholic historian does not scruple to treat it as an unjustifiable assumption.[2] It seems, indeed, incomprehensible, that the Popes, professing themselves to be the Vicars of Christ, should, for upwards of two centuries, have made it the one great object of all their efforts, to establish a claim so unfounded, so utterly opposed to the commands of Him who said, "My kingdom is not of this world." By the admission of their own followers, they stand convicted either of an error so great as to destroy all their credit as spiritual guides, or of the wilful contrivance of a scheme of fraud, robbery, and wrong so monstrous as apparently to justify the language of Wycliffe and his disciples, in representing the whole of the Papal system as the work of Anti-christ.

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[1] Dante's Inferno, cant. xix. 107.; Hallam, vol. ii. pp. 321.—335; Mosheim, vol. ii. pp. 600. 632.

[2] Lingard, vol. iii. p. 12, note; vol. iv. pp. 156, 157.

II. 1. In considering the domestic state of the English Church with reference to the civil condition and privileges of the clergy of this period, we must observe that, though the position of the bishops, as officers of the state, was materially changed after the Norman conquest, by their being withdrawn from the County Courts, they still continued to play a most important and conspicuous part in the management of political and civil affairs. It could not, indeed, be otherwise; for, though the veneration rendered to the persons of the clergy was probably much less in the 13th century than in former times, a body which engrossed so large a proportion (amounting to nearly one half) of the landed property of the country must have had very considerable weight in the political scale. Three of the highest functionaries in the realm were the two archbishops and the chancellor, who was also a clergyman. The bishops, and heads of religious houses holding their temporalities immediately of the crown, formed one branch of the great councils of the nation under the Norman kings, and the sovereign very commonly chose his ministers from the same body. Moreover, it appears, that, when the knights, citizens, and burgesses were summoned to parliament in the 13th century, the inferior clergy also had their representatives in the national council.[1] This high political position was, doubtless, occasionally abused for bad purposes. We have already mentioned some remarkable cases of military and political bishops, and the period of which we are now writing abounds with similar instances.

It was perhaps a natural consequence of the feudal system, that bishops and abbots should lead their retainers to the field; and, therefore, we ought not to be surprised at a bishop of Durham commanding a division of the English army at the battle of Falkirk, more especially as that prelate successfully claimed royal rights within his diocese. Nor indeed should we be too much scandalised by the resistance offered by a bishop of Exeter to the visitation of his metropolitan with an armed force; more especially as the next century witnessed a still more absurd phenomenon, in a bishop of Norwich leading an army to the continent, to support the cause of one of the rival Popes.[1] Possibly, also, the diversion of hunting, though forbidden by the canons, might be an excusable recreation for a martial prelate.[2] The eminence of the bishops as politicians and statesmen seems to have arisen from the fact that they were the best educated men of the age, and, therefore, they were naturally preferred to the lay nobility for employments in which intellectual ability was required. Several of their number, with the primate Reynolds at their head, took an active part in the deposition of Edward II., and one of them, Orlton, bishop of Hereford, was unhappily conspicuous on this occasion, and was even accused of being a party to the king's death. Archbishop Stratford was Edward III.'s prime minister, and is said to have suggested to that monarch his ill-advised claim to the throne of France. But, in this reign, the practice of employing clergymen in secular offices proceeded to such an extent as to cause great scandal. Consequently, the parliament, in 1371, petitioned the king for the exclusion of ecclesiastics from the highest offices of state, and partially succeeded in their object, though the evil was one which could not be at once abolished.[3] On the other hand, there were eminent examples of prelates who showed themselves by no means unworthy of the high position assigned to them by the constitution of the realm.

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[1] Lingard, vol. iii. p. 171.

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[1] Lingard, vol. iii. pp. 229.; Collier, vol. iii. pp. 60. 63. 177.

[2] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. iii. p. 363.; Johnson, vol. ii. pp 86, 87.

[3] Collier, vol. iii. pp. 54. 57. 65. 131.

Archbishop Langton's services to his country are ever to be remembered with thankfulness by all Englishmen who prize those liberties which he asserted so firmly and so successfully. It is an interesting fact in the history of God's providential dealings with the English people, that one who owed his elevation exclusively to papal favour, should have been the chief instrument employed for building up that free constitution, the spirit of which is so utterly opposed to papal principles.[1] Nor can we justly deny praise, on similar grounds, to Archbishop Winchelsey, for his spirited resistance to Edward I.'s arbitrary taxation of the clergy, and his co-operation with the lay barons in procuring from that prince the confirmation of Magna Charta, with the additional clause against illegal tallages.[2]

Nor were the prelates of this period merely eminent as statesmen and politicians. Among the archbishops, Edmund Rich of Canterbury, and Sewell and Thorsby of York; and among the suffragans, Grosstête of Lincoln, and Poore of Chichester (afterwards translated to Salisbury, and thence to Durham), would have been ornaments of the Church in any age. Edmund of Canterbury, in his earnest endeavours to reform the abuses of the Church, met with so little encouragement from either the Pope or the king, that he retired from the archbishopric to a life of privacy in France, where he died soon afterwards. As a posthumous compensation for all N.B. his disappointments, he received from Innocent IV. the honour of canonisation. Sewell, like Grosstête, distinguished himself by his opposition to Papal exactions, and to the intrusion of foreigners into his diocese. Poore and Thorsby, men eminent in other respects, left lasting monuments of their munificence to posterity, in the noble structures of Salisbury Cathedral, and the choir of York Minster.[3]

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[1] To Langton also is attributed the humbler distinction of being the author of the division of the Bible into chapters.

[2] Lingard, vol. iii. pp. 255—259.

[3] Collier, vol. ii. pp. 491. 496. 548.; vol. iii. p. 132.

2. The importance which was attributed to the clergy, as high officers of the state and great landed proprietors, was enormously increased by the peculiar privileges conferred upon them by the general law of Christendom. Of these, the most prominent were, the exemption of their persons from the civil and criminal jurisdiction of the state, and the freedom of their property from liability to fiscal demands. We have before traced the progress of the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts, up to the time of the Constitutions of Clarendon. Although these constitutions were afterwards so modified as to limit the power of the secular judge over the clergy to cases of transgression of the charter of the forest, or matters respecting a lay fee, they seem to mark the period at which the privilege of clerical immunity attained its greatest height. From the reign of Henry III. we trace a continued, and upon the whole successful, effort to restrain the powers of the ecclesiastical courts, and keep the immunities of the clergy within due bounds. The principles of the common law of England, as distinguished from the canon law by which the ecclesiastical courts were guided, began now to be digested and arranged in a formal system, which was destined before long to become paramount in the country. This very reign was remarkable for a contest between the two rival systems, in which the lay peers asserted the supremacy of the common law, in words which have been handed down to posterity as indicating that spirit of independence of foreign control which has ever been characteristic of Englishmen. At a parliament held at Merton the bishops proposed the adoption of that principle of the canon law, which recognises the legitimacy of children born before wedlock, in case of the parents marrying afterwards; but the parliament roll tells us that "all the earls and barons replied, with one voice, that they would not change the laws of England which had hitherto been used and approved."[1] The supremacy of the common

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[1] Blackstone, vol. i. p. 19.

law was now constantly asserted by the issuing writs of prohibition (the form of which had existed even in Henry II.'s reign), to restrain the spiritual courts from taking cognisance of questions concerning the patronage of churches, suits respecting tithes, and breaches of contract.[1]

On the other hand, the provincial synods of Merton and Lambeth, held by archbishop Boniface in 1258 and 1261, complained of laymen judging the Lord's anointed, and asserted the pretensions of the ecclesiastical courts in language so high as to provoke even Henry III. to represent their constitutions to the Pope, as prejudicial to his crown and kingdom. Nevertheless, they did not pretend to claim for those courts the right of trying questions of the patronage of churches.[2] In the next reign the abstract right of the king's courts to issue prohibitions, was admitted by archbishop Peckham; and the statute of the 13th of Edward I., called from its first words "Circumspecte agatis," had a tendency to restrict the ecclesiastical courts to those causes which it enumerates as belonging to their jurisdiction. These are, penances for fornication, adultery, and the like; the cases of a church wanting repairs or proper furniture, or a churchyard wanting proper fences; the unlawful withholding of tithes, oblations, and the payments called mortuaries, which were, by special custom, due to the clergy on account of persons deceased; also the laying violent hands on a clerk, defamation, and breaches of contract guaranteed by oath. The jurisdiction of the spiritual courts was still further explained by the statute of Edward II., called Articuli Cleri, which, among other things, declares the important principle, that the examination of a clergyman, presented to a benefice, belongeth to a spiritual judge.[3] The privilege enjoyed by the clergy, of exemption from the criminal jurisdiction of the state, was curtailed by another statute of Edward I., which provided that a clerk charged with felony should not be delivered up to his ordinary, until an inquisition had first been taken whether he was guilty of the crime; and in case of his being found guilty, his real and personal estate were forfeited to the king.[1] Moreover, with the object of wiping off the reproach frequently brought upon the clergy, that they were encouraged to commit crimes by the lightness of the punishment inflicted on them, a provincial constitution of Archbishop Islep, in Edward III.'s reign, provided that clerks convicted of any capital offence should suffer perpetual imprisonment in the bishop's gaol, with constant rigorous penance, and never be restored to their former station and employment.[2] Some curious cases happened in Edward III.'s reign, which may serve to illustrate the extent to which this clerical immunity was carried. Orlton, bishop of Hereford, being charged with high treason before the House of Lords, claimed his privilege as a clerk, of refusing to answer the charge before that tribunal. Although he was delivered up to the archbishop, on that occasion, he was afterwards brought to be tried before the Court of King's Bench by a common jury; and then the archbishops of Canterbury, York, and Dublin came into court with their crosses erected, and carried him off. Notwithstanding this, the trial proceeded to a conviction, and the king seized his estate, though he permitted the metropolitan to retain the custody of his person.[3] In the same reign, a bishop of Ely, being accused of harbouring one guilty of murder, demanded to be tried by his peers, but was obliged to submit to the verdict of a common jury. Being convicted, he required of the archbishop that he should be admitted to what was called the canonical purgation; that is, a purgation by his own oath, and the oaths of other parties, who were called compurgators. Not obtaining this request from the primate, he appealed to the Pope, who excommunicated the secular judges who had tried him. Upon this, the king issued a proclamation, declaring all persons who should bring letters, citations, or other process from the Pope, to be out of his protection. Notwithstanding this threatening state of affairs, no serious rupture with the court of Rome took place: the matter was on the point of being accommodated, when the bishop of Ely died.[1]

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[1] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. pp. 316, 317.

[2] Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 182. 186.; Collier, vol. ii. pp. 548. 561.

[3] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 317. note; Collier, vol. ii. p. 589., vol. iii. pp. 11. 45.

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[1] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 318.

[2] Johnson, vol. ii. p. 413.; Collier, vol. iii. p. 112.

[3] Collier, vol. iii. p. 50.

As we have referred to the punishments inflicted by the ecclesiastical courts, it may be considered not out of place if we explain here the nature and effects of the most common of these punishments, viz. excommunication. This, which (without reference to its religious effects) may be regarded as originally only an act of discipline exercised by the Christian Church, in pursuance of a right, which every society claims, of ridding itself of unruly members, became, in the hands of the daring ecclesiastics of the middle ages, a weapon sometimes used for defence against lawless power, more frequently for advancing the claims of clerical ambition. The canons of the period of which we are now speaking, are full of denunciations of this punishment against offences of a character so multifarious, as to include under the same sentence with the grossest moral crimes such matters as irregularities of clerical dress, the demand of fees for the sacraments and other offices of the Church, intrusion upon Church property, the hindering of the administration of a deceased person's goods, the procuring of prohibitions from the secular courts, the refusal to perform penances, the violation of sanctuary, and the impugning of Magna Charta.[2] The effects attributed in a superstitious age to a sentence of excommunication, may perhaps be correctly estimated from the forms of general excommunication which have been preserved, and which it was customary at this period for the bishop in his cathedral, and the parish priest in his church, publicly to pronounce on certain specified days, with bells tolling and candles lighted.[1]

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[1] Collier, vol. iii pp. 121—123.

[2] Johnson, vol. ii. passim, pp. 28—310.

The most remarkable thing in these disgusting and unchristian forms of execration, is the horrible particularity of the curses which were imprecated upon a man under all possible circumstances, and so as to affect every part of his body. Nor were the evil effects confined to the body, for the sentence concluded thus: "As this candle is deprived of its present light, so let them be deprived of their souls in hell." Besides the supposed consequences to the body and soul of the excommunicated person, he was subjected to the certainty of being excluded, as a leper, from the society of his fellow men, who by intercourse with him were exposed to the same punishment.[2] In addition to this, he was incapable of being a witness, or bringing an action at law; and after he had been under the sentence forty days, a writ issued at the suit of the bishop, by virtue of which he might be arrested and detained in prison till he was absolved. If he died under excommunication, his remains were not allowed to have the privilege of Christian burial.[3]

3. The doctrine of the exemption of ecclesiastical property from the demands of the state was little regarded by the Anglo-Norman sovereigns. Under the pretence that according to the feudal law the estates of the vacant sees reverted to the crown at the death of their possessors, they seized them, as we have seen, with lawless rapacity, and occupied them for years without scruple or remorse. The acts of Rufus and the two first Henries in this respect were, however, irregular acts of tyranny, which could not be drawn into a justifiable precedent. John and Henry III. adopted the milder ex-

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[1] Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 79. 257. 309.

[2] Ibid. pp. 80. 313.

[2] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 242.; Burn's Eccles. Law, vol. ii. p. 248.

pedients of asking money from the bishops and abbots in parliament, and soliciting supplies from the inferior clergy by letter. The latter prince, as well as his successor, called in the aid of the Pope for the enforcement of similar demands[1]; but in 1294 Edward I. ventured to dispense with this assistance. The sums deposited in the treasuries of churches and monasteries were seized under the name of loans, by commissioners, for the king's use; and Edward in person addressed the clergy, and demanded a half of their income. After a fruitless attempt at resistance, they were compelled by threats to submit to this tyrannical imposition. The enforcement of a similar exaction in the following year led them to seek the aid of the Pope in defence of their privileges; and Boniface VIII. issued a bull, forbidding the clergy of any Christian country to grant to laymen the revenues of their benefices, without the permission of the Holy See. This bull being pleaded by the clergy in answer to a fresh demand from the king, he gave them two months to reconsider their determination, during which time their effects were put under sequestration. At the end of the period Winchelsey, the primate, delivered their answer, declaring that they had two lords, the one spiritual, the other temporal, to both of whom obedience was due, but more to the spiritual. They professed their willingness to do all in their power, and to send deputies at their own expense to consult the Pontiff. This was quite enough for Edward; after consulting the lay peers, he issued a proclamation of outlawry against all the clergy, both regular and secular; and in the province of Canterbury his officers took possession of all their real and personal property for the benefit of the crown, giving the owners the option of redeeming it before the ensuing Easter. The archbishop of York and his clergy contrived, by a grant of a fifth, to pacify the king, and escape further proceedings.

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[1] Lingard, vol. iii. pp. 171. 254.; Johnson, vol. ii. p. 211.

Soon afterwards the convocation of the clergy assembled; but, before they began their deliberations, a royal message was delivered to them, forbidding them, under the severest penalties, to make any constitutions to the prejudice of the king, or any of his ministers or loyal subjects. The violence of Edward in the end so far succeeded as to compel the greater part of the clergy to submit to his demands. Winchelsey, however, stood firm, and chose to endure the spoiling of his goods rather than acquiesce in an unlawful claim; his estates were seized for the king's use, and he himself was reduced to the necessity of subsisting upon charity. At length the arbitrary proceedings of the king in levying money from his subjects raised up a formidable combination against him, headed by the Earls of Hereford and Norfolk, the high constable and marshal of England, with whom the primate acted in concert. The result was, that Edward in his turn was obliged to submit to the indignant remonstrances of his people, and to confirm the great charter, with the addition of an important clause, by which he bound himself to levy no more tallages or aids from laity or clergy without the consent of the parliament.[1]

4. Edward I.'s demands from the clergy were sometimes made in parliament,—to which, as we have seen, the inferior clergy in this century sent representatives,—and sometimes in a provincial synod, or, as it now began to be called, a convocation of the clergy. This body appears to have existed in its modern form, if not in Henry III.'s reign, at least in that of Edward I. When the king signified his wish to the archbishop that he should convoke the clergy of his province, writs were issued for that purpose, addressed not only to the bishops, abbots, and priors, but also to the deans and archdeacons; and in the course of time the cathedral chapters and parochial clergy also sent their proctors or representatives

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[1] Hallam, vol. ii. p. 323., iii. pp. 2—5.; Collier, vol. ii. pp. 608—612.; Lingard, vol. iii. pp. 254—263.

to these provincial councils.[1] The practice of calling the inferior clergy to these assemblies seems to have prevailed more or less from the time of archbishop Boniface's synod of Lambeth in 1261; although there are instances, both in the 13th and 14th centuries, of archbishops promulgating canons in provincial synods attended by bishops only.[2] From the end of the 14th century the records of these councils generally express that their canons were made with the consent of the clergy of the province.[3] The clergy of the province of York made regulations for themselves, independently of the province of Canterbury; but in 1452 the convocation of the former province bound themselves to observe for law all the constitutions of the latter province that were not repugnant to their own constitutions.

Although the convocation was usually called together in obedience to the king's writ directed to the archbishop, the issuing of this was not indispensable[4]; but the provincial council might not meet against the king's express commands, or establish anything to the prejudice of the royal prerogative. For offending in this last particular archbishop Peckham was obliged to appear before the king in parliament, and revoke some of the constitutions of the Council of Reading.[5]

Besides the provincial council or convocation, the clergy had their separate synods in each diocese, which met every year under their respective bishops, and in some instances ventured to make important regulations independently of the provincial councils, and even in direct opposition to their authority. There is a remarkable instance of this afforded by a synod of Exeter, which in 1287 passed a constitution that by implication enjoins the giving the cup to the laity in the Holy Communion, although the constitutions of archbishop Peckham in 1281 direct that the Holy Communion shall be administered only in the species of bread.[1]

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[1] Lingard, vol. iii. p. 171.; Collier, vol. ix. Records, No. 39.; Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 208. 268.

[2] Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 253. 379.

[3] See Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 409. 454. 457. 477. 482. 489. 493. 506. 513, 514. 520. 527.

[4] Burn's Eccles. Law. vol. ii. p. 23.

[5] Johnson, vol. ii. p. 258.

5. The ecclesiastical canons, made after the Norman conquest, contain frequent mention of archdeacons and rural deans as performing important functions in the discipline of the Church. The former of these officers, although originally only in deacon's orders, appears to have occupied the higher station of the two. It is implied in the Constitutions of Clarendon, that the archdeacon was next in rank to the bishop, and that he had a court of his own; and this precedence is expressly recognised in the Constitutions of Othobon.[2] By the last-mentioned canons the archdeacon is charged with the duty of enforcing the laws against clerical incontinence, as by other canons sundry other matters of discipline are entrusted to his control. He had the power of asserting his authority over the clergy in some instances by suspension, and over the churchwardens (of which officers the first mention occurs in 1322) by pecuniary fine, to be applied to the reparation of the church.[3] It was his duty regularly to visit the clergy and their churches, to be frequently present at their meetings in their several deaneries, and there to instruct them in the meaning and method of administration of the sacraments and other ordinances; to inspect the books, furniture, vestments, and utensils belonging to the churches, and to inquire about the due performance of the several offices of religion. The archdeacon had, moreover, to see that all things necessary to the decent performance of divine service were duly furnished by the parishioners, whose liabilities in respect of the repairs of the

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[1] Collier, vol. ii. pp. 578. 599.; Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 274. 290.

[2] Constitutions of Clarendon, Arts. 8. 10. 13.; Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 52, 53. 55. 221.

[3] Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 289. 339. 370.

body of the church, and of the enclosure of the churchyard, and the supply of books and vestments, are plainly set forth in the canons of the time.[1]

In some cases the archdeacon was, by special custom, allowed the cognisance of matrimonial causes (which was expressly denied to the rural deans), but he was not to determine them finally without consulting the bishop. The rural dean was the president of the chapter of the clergy of each district, called a deanery, whose office it was to inspect the behaviour of the clergy and people within the district, and to exercise jurisdiction in certain matters delegated to him by the bishop or archdeacon; and he, as well as the archdeacon, was distinguished by having an appropriate official seal. Both archdeacons and rural deans were forbidden to exact anything from the clergy, or to travel with hunting dogs or hawks, or to take with them more than a small number of men and horses on their visitations. It was, however, usual to provide a suitable entertainment for them, under the name of a procuration, when they were visiting churches; and this, by a papal bull of 1336, might be commuted for a fixed payment from each church visited.[2]

6. In mentioning the origin of the territorial divisions and endowment of the Church, we have before observed, that in Anglo-Saxon times the ownership of a church, founded by a layman, remained in him as the patron. Consequently the church might be conferred by his sole donation, except where the individual on whom he conferred it was not in holy orders. Such a person must be first presented to the bishop for ordination, who was at liberty to examine and refuse him. The clamour against lay investitures and lay patronage in general probably led to the custom which was established in the 12th century, that no clerk should be admitted to a

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[1] Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 166. 168. 317, 318.

[2] Ibid. pp. 81. 86, 87. 109. 166. 171. 232, 233. 357—359. 558.

benefice without institution. This was a species of spiritual investiture, exercised by the bishops, which has ever since been retained in the Church; and it implied the right of rejection, after examination, for insufficiency of learning, defect of morals, or other good cause.[1] This right being exercised by a bishop of Norwich in Edward II.'s reign, gave rise to a trial in the king's court, in which the question of the sufficiency in respect of learning of the clerk presented was decided by the certificate of the archbishop.[2]

After institution, which was the grant of the spiritual cure of a benefice, followed induction, which was the bestowing of corporal possession of the temporalities of the church, and was generally performed by the archdeacon, who was allowed to exact a fixed sum, by way of fee, from the person inducted.

In case of a benefice not being filled up by the lay patron within six months, the right of appointment of the clergyman devolved by lapse on the bishop.[3]

The canons of the 13th century are full of enactments against the holding a plurality of benefices; but how little effect these had may be judged by the complaint of archbishop Peckham in the Council of Reading, that there were some who, by right and wrong, accumulated benefices as if nothing in the way of legal provision against such an abuse had been done by former archbishops.[4]

7. The law of England in the 13th century neither allowed to the clergy and monastic bodies the unrestricted right of alienation of their estates, nor the power of acquiring more landed property at pleasure; but the former prohibition seems to have taken its origin from the fears of the ecclesiastical body, the latter was a measure of policy suggested by the

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[1] Blackstone, vol. ii. p. 23.; Burn, Eccles. Law, vol. i. p. 152.

[2] Collier, vol. iii. pp. 7, 8.

[3] Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 104, 105. 333.

[4] Johnson, vol. ii. p. 253.

jealousy of the state. The penalty imposed upon alienations by abbots, priors, archdeacons, or other clergymen, was, that they should within a given time restore to the deprived church or monastery the property alienated, or forfeit their benefices or dignities. The only ecclesiastical persons who were excepted from this rule were bishops, who, with the consent of their chapters, might give a fiftieth part of their estates to a monastery, and a hundredth to any other church.[1]

There was, moreover, one method by which, during the three centuries that succeeded the Norman conquest, the property of the Church was, to a very considerable extent, alienated from its original uses. This was called the Appropriation or Impropriation of Benefices, traces of which existed in Anglo-Saxon times, as appears by the records of Domesday Book, and from which have sprung some anomalies and irregularities that have lasted to our own times. The lay patron or owner of a church, with the consent of the king and the bishop, divested himself of his rights in favour of a chapter or monastery, the members of which received the income of the benefice, and undertook to provide for the cure of souls either in person or by deputy. The most common instances of appropriation were in favour of monastic bodies and the military orders; but lay hospitals, gilds and fraternities, and even nunneries, had churches appropriated for their benefit. At first the corporation, in whose favour the appropriation was made, delegated one of their own members, or appointed a stipendiary curate, to perform the spiritual duties of the parish, while the whole body shared the revenues of the church in common.

As early as the 12th century this practice was found to be so injurious to the Church in general, that a canon of Anselm forbade monks to accept the impropriations of benefices without the bishop's consent, or to rob those which were given them of their revenues, while they starved the priest serving the cure. In the next century a partial remedy for the evil was provided by the canons, which ordained that in every impropriated church a vicar should be instituted by the bishop, with a sufficient allowance to him from the revenues, a portion of which was also to be distributed, under the direction of the diocesan, in alms to the poor.[1]

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[1] Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 114, 115.

The monastic bodies, however, during the 13th and 14th centuries, were too powerful to be controlled by ecclesiastical constitutions, which might at any time be overruled by an appeal to the Pope; and it became necessary, in the reign of Richard II., for the legislature to interfere, by directing that every license for the appropriation of a church should contain a clause providing for the sufficient endowment of a vicar. This enactment was followed in Henry IV.'s reign by one of a more stringent nature, which required that in future, in every appropriated church, a secular person should be ordained vicar perpetual, canonically instituted and inducted, and suitably endowed by the discretion of the ordinary, to do divine service, and to inform the people, and to keep hospitality there; and that no member of a religious order should in anywise be made vicar in such a church.[2] This statute, in providing for the permanent endowment of a vicar, out of the income of the church, did not take away, from those who had the appropriation, either the remainder of that income or the right of appointing the vicar. Its effects, however, have been of the greatest importance to the Church, inasmuch as it has given rise to the distinction between rectories and vicarages, the latter being an entirely new class of benefices, founded upon this statute, and possessing only a limited portion of the ecclesiastical revenues of parishes, the larger portion of which is paid to the rectors.

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[1] Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 27. 93. 236. 364.

[2] Burn's Eccles. Law, vol. i. tit. Appropriation.

The importance of this statute may be better understood when we consider that since the dissolution of the monasteries in Henry VIII.'s time, the rectors of parishes, the revenues of which were appropriated before that event, have in very many instances been laymen, and the cure of souls has in almost every appropriated church been permanently annexed to the vicarage.[1]

Long before this legislative encouragement was given to the endowment of vicarages, it had been found necessary to restrain the covetousness of the monastic bodies, by interposing in the way of their acquiring lands hindrances which affected the secular clergy also. So large a proportion of the landed property of the country in the 13th century was vested in the clergy and monks, as materially to affect the interests of the feudal lords, inasmuch as they derived none of the usual reliefs upon succession and alienation from tenants, who, in the contemplation of the law, held their lands in perpetual succession; and who, not being liable in many instances to perform the ordinary feudal services, were said to hold them in a dead hand, *morte main*. This consideration led to an insertion of a clause in Magna Charta which was construed to prohibit alienations to religious houses without the consent of the lord of the fee; and the 7th of Edward I. forbids all alienation in mortmain, on pain of forfeiture to the lord, or, in his default, to the king.[2] This statute, however, does not take away from the crown the power of granting licenses for alienations in mortmain.

III. The internal state of the Church of England during the period of which we are writing, with reference to the important questions of doctrine and discipline, appears, from the unequivocal testimony of the canons of national and provincial synods, to have been exceedingly corrupt.

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[1] Blackstone, vol. i. pp. 386, 387.

[2] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 320.

It could hardly be otherwise, as the Church of Rome had now by formal decrees stereotyped, as it were, some of the most glaring errors of former times.

1. At the Council of Lateran, held at Rome by Innocent III. in 1215, that pontiff, without consulting anybody, promulgated sundry decrees upon matters of religion, containing, among other things, the atrocious doctrine, that secular princes are bound to exterminate all heretics from their dominions. He also gave a new view of what was heretical, by defining dogmatically, in opposition to the opinions of Berengarius, which had recently been revived in the Church, the unscriptural notion of transubstantiation, and requiring it to be held as an article of the faith.[1]

Although archbishop Langton was present at this council, it may be a question how far his presence and assent can be construed into an acceptance of the decrees of the council by the English Church, more particularly as he was at that time under suspension. That however the dogma of transubstantiation was received in England in the 13th century, if not synodically decreed, seems to be sufficiently proved by the constitutions of archbishop Peckham, which order that the bells be tolled at the elevation of the body of Christ, that the people who have not leisure to be present at mass, may bow their knees wherever they are. And it is worthy of remark, that these same constitutions which contain this provocation to idolatry, set forth an exposition of the Decalogue which, while it in words forbids idolatry, omits the second commandment.

The same canons also declare explicitly that the body and blood of the Lord, the whole living and true Christ, are given under the species of bread, and thus give a sanction to a second error, which follows as a natural consequence from transubstantiation; viz. the administration of the Communion in one kind.[1] To impress the doctrine of transubstantiation more strongly upon the minds of the people, a solemn festival was instituted by Urban IV. in 1264, in honour of the body of Christ.[2] Moreover, the mendicant orders supported the notion with all their influence, and in its defence propounded a new and subtle distinction of startling absurdity. They held that by a miracle the accidents, or sensible properties, of a substance might be separated from the substance itself, and that such a miracle took place in every celebration of the Eucharist. The substance of the bread, they said, was taken away immediately after the consecration, and the substance of the body of Christ introduced instead; although, as the sensible properties of the bread remained the same, our senses could give us no intelligence of the matter. This was an attempt, by a bold and groundless assertion, to make the refutation of the dogma, by means of an appeal to the senses, impossible.[3]

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[1] Mosheim, vol. ii. pp. 460. 559.; Collier, vol. ii. p. 444.

2. To proceed to another distinguishing feature of the doctrinal system of the Church of Rome, the honour paid to the Virgin Mary, which, to say the least, always had a tendency to idolatry, received a further encouragement in the 12th century, by the propagation of the notion that she was conceived free from the taint of original sin. This dogma, which seems to involve a denial of a fundamental article of the Christian faith, was, however, not universally admitted, and even at the first met with a determined opposition from the celebrated St. Bernard. In the 13th and 14th centuries it was made the subject of a very warm controversy between the Franciscans, who, with the university of Paris, supported it, and the Dominicans, who denied it. It is a remarkable fact in ecclesiastical history, that, though this question has excited frequent controversy in the Romish Church, and is

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[1] Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 273, 274. 284.

[2] Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 569.

[3] Le Bas's Life of Wiclif, pp. 186, 187.

said to be agitated among their theologians with the greatest interest even at the present day, no dogmatical decree has as yet been made, requiring that the doctrine should be believed as an article of faith. Although it never was formally received by the English Church, a festival, in honour of the conception of the Virgin, was appointed by archbishop Mepham, in 1328, who professed to follow the authority of his predecessor, Anselm.[1]

3. We have before mentioned the practice of persons being allowed to commute their canonical penances for the undertaking of some pious work. The Popes stretched this privilege much further, by proclaiming, not only a plenary remission of all temporal penalties of sin to such as would undertake a particular work, but also a general absolution from all their sins. This was at first done sparingly, and only for an occasion of magnitude, such as the Crusades[2]; afterwards the indulgences, as they were called, were extended to matters of less moment, and even made the means of bringing money into the Papal treasury. In order to support this pernicious practice, an absurd doctrine was invented, and, in the 13th century, maintained by no less a person than the celebrated Thomas Aquinas, "that there is an immense treasury of good works performed by holy men, over and above what duty required; and that the Roman Pontiff is the keeper and distributer of this treasure, and able, out of this inexhaustible fund, to transfer to every one such an amount of good works as his necessities require, or as will suffice to avert the punishment of his sins." One of the privileges possessed by the mendicant orders, was an ample power to grant indulgences, and the Popes intended that this should be a means of subsistence to the Franciscans.[3] These friars made a gainful trade by what they called "letters

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[1] Mosheim, vol. ii. pp. 461. 657.; Johnson, vol. ii. p. 346.

[2] Johnson, vol. ii. p. 68.; Lewis's Life of Pecock, p. 65.

[3] Mosheim, vol. iii. pp. 450, 451. 526, 527.

of fraternity," which were documents by which they assured to the purchaser a participation in the masses, prayers, and other religious exercises of their order, both during his life and after death.[1]

4. Closely connected with the abuse of indulgences is the superstition which led persons to make pilgrimages to the shrines of particular saints, to whose images some especial virtue was supposed to belong. It was believed that prayers made before such images were peculiarly efficacious in procuring indulgences, by which the pains of purgatory were remitted for several thousands of years. The saints most in vogue in England on this account, during the age of which we write, were our Lady of Walsingham and Thomas of Canterbury. Crowds of eager pilgrims flocked from all quarters to the shrine of the last-named saint; and the wealth heaped up under the altar of the cathedral, near the crypt where the relics of the martyr lay, was, in the age of the Reformation, of a splendour and magnitude sufficient to excite the astonishment of the celebrated Erasmus of Rotterdam.[2]

5. The superstitious practice of celebrating masses for the dead appears to have grown to its greatest height in the 14th century, when the custom of founding chapels (or chantries, as they were called) in cathedral or parochial churches, prevailed extensively in England. These chantries were endowed with lands or revenues for the maintenance of a priest, who was to pray for the souls of the founder and his friends. In some instances the revenues of hospitals founded for the relief of the poor, were diverted from their proper use, for the purpose of maintaining these nurseries of superstition.[3]

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[1] Lewis's Life of Wiclif, p. 24. note, and p. 301.

[2] Lewis's Life of Pecock, pp. 66. 104.

[3] Burn's Ecclesiastical Law, tit. "Chantry;" Massingberd's English Reformation, p. 62.

6. Under a system which sanctioned such gross errors, it was hardly possible that the teachers should be better than their doctrine. According to the canon law, the visible head of the Church possessed the power of dispensing with the obligations of the moral law upon the slightest pretexts; and the practice of the Popes of the middle ages showed, that they considered their exaltation above the law in the light of an unlimited prerogative, which allowed them to do any amount of injustice and wrong, provided it were for the benefit of the Church. It was the natural consequence of such a state of things, that the inferior members should partake of the corruptions of their head.[1] If the Popes were simoniacal, extortioners, unjust, covetous, the numerous canons of the 13th and 14th centuries against simony, intrusion into benefices by fraud or violence, pluralities, and commendams, show that the parochial clergy of England were in their degree equally tainted with the evil practices of pontiffs and cardinals. Moreover, the canons of this period continue the disgraceful chain of testimony afforded by those of the two former centuries, concerning the prevalence of the sin of incontinence among the clergy.[2] Their ignorance and neglect of duty form a subject of complaint in the Lambeth constitutions of archbishop Peckham in the 13th century; and in the 14th, if we may credit Wycliffe's account of them, they were even worse. To use the language of an eloquent biographer of that reformer, "they were buried in all the surfeitings of a worldly life, haunted taverns out of measure, and stirred up laymen to excess, idleness, profane swearing, and disgraceful brawls. They wasted their time and wealth in gambling and revelry, went about the streets roaring and outrageous, and sometimes had neither eye, nor tongue, nor hand, nor foot, to help themselves for drunkenness. In the midst of this worse than pagan desecration of themselves, they maintained

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[1] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. pp. 293—298.

[2] See Johnson, vol. ii. Index under various heads.

their influence and authority by an impious prostitution of the power of the keys; and extorted, by the terror of spiritual censures, the money and the obedience of their congregations."[1]

Nor was the moral condition of the monastic orders at all better than that of the secular clergy. Whatever degree of merit may be ascribed to the friars, on account of the revival of religion at the early part of the 13th century, they soon degenerated into "preachers of chronicles, fables, and leasings."[2] The moral irregularities of the nuns began again, as in Anglo-Saxon times, to form the subject of especial canonical provisions; and, in short (to use the language of Mr. Hallam), "we must reject, in the excess of our candour, all testimonies that the middle ages present, from the solemn declaration of councils and reports of judicial inquiry, to the casual evidence of common fame in the ballad or romance, if we would extenuate the general corruption of the monastic institutions."[3]

But the time had now arrived when the mighty fabric of spiritual power, which the Popes had raised upon the false assumption that they were the vicars of Christ upon earth, was to be shaken from its very foundations, in England. The causes that led to this change, and the instrument by means of which it was effected, must furnish the subject of another chapter.

Before we conclude this, however, it may seem not out of place to mention, that the same age in which it was found necessary to restrain alienations in mortmain, was also a period in which the ecclesiastical architecture of England was rapidly advancing to perfection. In the 12th century a remarkable improvement upon the Anglo-Norman style of architecture had begun to gain ground, in the introduction of the pointed arch in conjunction with the semicircular arch. In the buildings of the next century the latter was very generally discarded to make way for the former, and a style, since called the Early English, prevailed throughout that century, of which the distinguishing characteristics are lightness, elegance, and simplicity, and which has given us, among other noble monuments of art, the cathedrals of Salisbury, Wells, and Lincoln, and the nave and transepts of Westminster Abbey, as rebuilt under Henry III. This style by degrees gave way, during Edward I.'s reign, to one of a still more ornamental character, which prevailed till the latter end of the 14th century, and is commonly called the Decorated English style, of which some of the most remarkable specimens are preserved in the cathedrals of Exeter and Lichfield, the cloisters of Norwich cathedral, and part of York Minster.

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[1] Le Bas's Life of Wiclif, p. 162.

[2] Lewis's Life of Wiclif, p. 24.

[3] Johnson, vol. ii. pp. 267. 293—295.; Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. iii. p. 352.

The Decorated English style in its turn gave way, at the close of Edward III.'s reign, to what has been called the Florid style, on account of the profusion and minuteness of ornamental detail. It has also received the name of the Perpendicular style, on account of the mullions of the windows and divisions of ornamental panel work being in perpendicular lines. This style prevailed till the reign of Henry VIII., and some of the most remarkable specimens of it are the chapel of King's College, Cambridge, and Henry VII.'s chapel in Westminster Abbey.[1]

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[1] Bloxam's Gothic Architecture.

CHAP. XIX.

THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JOHN WYCLIFFE.

For some centuries before the 12th, we read but little of the prevalence, in the west of Europe, of opinions opposed to the received faith of the Church. It has been said, however, and the theory has been upheld with great earnestness, and with some strong presumption in its favour, that in the valleys of Piedmont a people, since known by the name of Waldenses or Vaudois, maintained from an early period a purer form of primitive Christianity, uncorrupted by the errors and additions of the Church of Rome. Some have traced this to the teaching of one Claudius, bishop of Turin, who in the 9th century distinguished himself by his zeal against the abuses of image worship, relics, and pilgrimages. At a later period, there existed among the same people a remarkable document, which has been preserved to our own times, in the shape of a poem in the Provençal dialect, called "The Noble Lesson," written, probably, in the 12th century. This work is a metrical abridgment of the history and doctrine of the Old and New Testament; and, is in fact, a strong protest against the errors of the Papacy, the simony of the priesthood, masses and prayers for the dead, the impostures of absolution, and the abuses of the power of the keys.[1] Others have ascribed the origin of the Waldenses to Peter Waldo, a merchant of Lyons, who is said to have been induced, by a perusal of the Gospels in his native language, to secede from the Roman Church. Whatever may have been their origin, they have maintained their faith, notwithstanding severe persecutions, even to the present day; and it is admitted, by Roman Catholic writers of the middle ages, that they were a simple innocent people, against whom nothing that Protestants would call heretical could be alleged, although it seems doubtful whether they derived their orders according to the regular channel of episcopal succession.[1] Other sectaries appeared during the 12th century in Italy, Switzerland, and more especially the south of France. These, under various names, of which the most noted are the Cathari and Albigenses, held opinions of a questionable character, as partaking of gnosticism and manicheism, and said to be derived from the East, from a sect called the Paulicians. Thirty persons of this description were convicted in Henry II.'s reign of denying the sacraments, and perished miserably of cold at Oxford. In the next century Innocent III. proclaimed a crusade against the Albigenses of Languedoc, which was headed by the celebrated Simon Count de Montford. The fury of the persecutors in this sanguinary work went beyond even the worst atrocities of the pagan emperors of Rome, and would be satisfied with nothing less than the extermination of these unfortunate religionists. In spite of the inquisitors, however, new sectaries arose in different parts of Europe, whose opinions and practice were open to still graver objection, but whose existence testified, notwithstanding their errors, the commencement of an era of greater light, because of greater freedom.[2] The midnight darkness of the darkest ages had passed away, even as far back as the middle of the 12th century; and the Spirit of God had begun to move upon the chaos, and to stir up in men's minds a longing after light and knowledge.

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[1] Mosheim, vol. ii. pp. 217. 474. note; Le Bas's Life of Wiclif, pp. 24, 25.

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[1] Le Bas's Life of Wiclif, pp. 27, 28.

[2] Mosheim, vol. ii. pp. 466, 467. 582.; Hallam, vol. iii. pp. 464—471.

From this time the number of professed students of the Scriptures became much greater, although their expositions of the Holy Volume were not such as to assist the humble searcher after truth. Of the two schools of theologians which now arose, one professed to follow merely the letter of Holy Scripture and the interpretation of the Fathers; the other, after the example of Lanfranc and Anselm, resorted to reason and philosophy in solving theological difficulties. This was the origin of the scholastic divines, whose system prevailed from this period till the Reformation; of whom the most famous were: Peter Lombard, sometimes called the Master of the Sentences; Peter Abelard; Hales, the Irrefragable Doctor; Duns Scotus; and Thomas Aquinas.[1] Nor was the study of the Sacred Writings altogether confined to the schools; inasmuch as we find Innocent III. complaining of laymen and women making use of translations of the Scriptures; and in 1229, the persecuting council of Toulouse thought it necessary to prohibit the laity from possessing the Scriptures at all.[2]

It does not appear that the prohibition contained in this canon was enforced in England; but from the circumstance, that Romish writers have alleged that Wycliffe introduced a novelty, when he laid open the Gospel to the laity[3], it may be inferred, that this privilege was not enjoyed by them in the 13th century. The mass of the lowest class of the people being not yet raised from the condition of servitude, was still in a hopeless state of ignorance and wretchedness. Nevertheless, the university of Oxford was even then attended by a numerous body of students; and both that university and the sister institution of Cambridge began, in the 14th century, to hold out more encouragements for study, by the increase of the number of their foundations. Hitherto all works of literature had been composed in the Latin language; but at the end of the 13th century, the vernacular tongue of England was, for the first time, employed in verse in the composition of metrical chronicles.

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[1] Mosheim, vol. ii. pp. 451—454. [2] Hallam, vol. iii. pp. 472—474.

[3] Knighton, cited by Le Bas, p. 169.

The next century witnessed the publication, in English, of an exposition of the Psalter by Hampole, an Eremite; and Piers Plowman's Vision, a severe satire upon the clergy; which was followed afterwards by the poems of Chaucer.[1]

This intellectual revival, though not extensive or deeply felt, was yet sufficient to enable men to see more clearly the abuses of the existing system of the Church. Hence in the end it materially assisted in bringing about a great change in the spiritual condition of the people; so that those who were able to read, in their native tongue, such works as those which have been just mentioned, were in some degree prepared to profit by the translation of the Bible by Wycliffe.

Although this great Reformer was the first, in England, who ventured openly to controvert the doctrinal errors which prevailed in the 14th century, there had not been wanting previously, among the leaders of the English Church, persons who showed a degree of piety, learning, and right judgment, which seemed to qualify them for the work of reformation.

The mild and devout Bradwardine, who, acting as chaplain to Edward III. in his French campaigns, had been able to mitigate, by the precepts of the Gospel, the atrocities of war, had in 1349, for a few weeks, held the office of archbishop of Canterbury. Of such a man, in such a position, much might have been expected; but he was perhaps too meek in spirit for the stern career of a reformer of a corrupt Church, and he was too soon taken off to have time to originate any change.

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[1] Hallam, vol. iii. pp. 526, 527. 571—573. 596.; Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 648.

Another archbishop of that time, Fitzralph of Armagh, openly arraigned, before the Pope in person, the abuses of the mendicant system and the evil practices of the friars; and he is said to have shown a laudable zeal for the diffusion of Scriptural knowledge among his people, by translating the Bible into the Irish tongue.[1]

The labours of Fitzralph, however, have been almost forgotten, in comparison with the more lasting work of John Wycliffe, the pioneer, if not the author, of the English Reformation.

This extraordinary man is said to have been born in the village of the same name, near Richmond in Yorkshire, about the year 1324. At Oxford he was first admitted a member of Queen's College, then lately founded by Philippa, the consort of Edward III., and afterwards removed to Merton, a society in high repute on account of the number of eminent men whom it had produced. Wycliffe was a most diligent and successful student of the scholastic philosophy, a proficiency in which was at that time altogether necessary for any one who wished to establish a reputation for theological learning; and his success in this department obtained for him the highest praise from the cotemporary historian, Knighton, a bitter enemy of his person and doctrines. He was also a student of the canon and civil law, as well as of the laws of his own country, and so devoted himself to the reading of the Holy Scriptures, as to acquire the honourable title of the Evangelic Doctor. Of the ancient writers in divinity those whom he chiefly followed were the four Latin Fathers, Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, and Gregory; while of the moderns, Grosstête and Fitzralph, especially the former, were the authors who had the greatest influence in the formation of his opinions.[1]

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[1] Le Bas, p. 62—66.; Collier, vol. iii. p. 117.

His first work is said to have been a tract "On the last Age of the Church," published in 1356, chiefly remarkable for its severe attack upon the simony and covetousness of the clergy. About the year 1360 he commenced that fierce warfare against the mendicant orders from which he never desisted through life. His opinions on this subject may be collected from a work published some years afterwards, in which he arranged his charges against the friars under fifty heads. Of these, it will be sufficient to mention the first, which accuses them of holding that monstrous notion of development by which modern Roman Catholic controversialists have attempted to support their system against the charge of departure from Scripture and primitive antiquity. "Friars say that their religion, founded by sinful men, is more perfect than that religion, or order, which Christ himself made, who is both God and man." It is not very surprising that those who maintained such doctrine, or anything like it, should be regarded as the teachers of every kind of falsehood.[2]

In 1361, we find Wycliffe presented to the living of Fillingham, in the diocese of Lincoln, which he afterwards exchanged for another near Oxford: and in the same year he was made warden of Baliol College. This office he resigned, four years afterwards, for the headship of Canterbury Hall in the same university, a new foundation of archbishop Islep. From this position he was summarily ejected by Islep's successor, Langham, on the pretence that the appointment of a secular priest to the wardenship was contrary to the charter of foundation. On Wycliffe's refusal to obey the new warden, the archbishop sequestered the revenues of the Hall; and from this order Wycliffe appealed to the Pope. About three years afterwards, the Pope confirmed Langham's proceedings; but as in his decree he asserted that the foundation was intended for monks only, a statement which was contrary to the express words of the original charter, it was thought necessary to purchase from the crown, by the payment of a large sum of money, a confirmation of the Papal decision.[1]

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[1] Le Bas, pp. 74—76.

[2] Le Bas, pp. 78. 83. 90.

Some have referred to this obvious instance of injustice in the court of Rome, towards an opponent of the Pope's favourite orders, as a cause for Wycliffe's subsequent conduct. On the other hand, it may be fairly alleged that Wycliffe had already committed himself to a warfare against Papal abuses, not only by his opposition to the friars, but also by a tract published in answer to a monk, who had challenged him by name to defend the resolution of the parliament of 1366 against the Pope's demand of arrears of tribute on account of the submission of King John. Wycliffe, as a peculiar clerk or chaplain of the king, as he styles himself, readily accepted the challenge, and showed that the condition imposed by the Pope upon John was altogether a vain thing, which ought not to prejudice the kingdom of England, and could not bind his successors.[2]

In 1372, he took the degree of doctor of divinity, and began to read lectures in theology with great applause at Oxford. In 1374, he was named second of the commissioners appointed to negotiate at Bruges with the Papal court on the subject of provisions, which, notwithstanding the laws that had been passed to restrain them, still prevailed to an enormous extent. These negotiations were protracted for two years; but, though a treaty was concluded with the Pope, it was made only to be broken; and, in the very same year, the parliament complained as much as ever of the

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[1] Lewis's Life, pp. 292. 297.

[2] Le Bas, pp. 93—106.

Pope's drawing large sums from the Church of England, and that the richest benefices were held by cardinals and other aliens. One advantage, however, in all probability, followed from this mission, that Wycliffe became thereby more thoroughly acquainted, as it were, by ocular demonstration, with the iniquities of the Papal court, and returned to England more determined in his hostility to Papal abuses. Soon after his return he received from the crown a prebendal stall in the collegiate church of Westbury, in the diocese of Worcester, with the rectory of Lutterworth in Leicestershire.[1]

The teaching of Wycliffe in the divinity chair at Oxford was so plainly directed against the corruptions of the Papacy and the false doctrine of the friars, as to draw upon him the certain opposition of powerful enemies. The English prelates, however, though they partly owed their preferments to Papal patronage, do not seem to have taken any steps against him before the year 1377, when he was cited to appear before his ordinary at St. Paul's, London, on the 19th of February, on a charge of maintaining false doctrines. On the day appointed Wycliffe appeared before the convocation of prelates, but not alone. He was attended by two of the first subjects of the realm, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, one of the king's sons, and Lord Henry Percy, the Earl Marshal. At the same time, a great crowd collected about the church to witness the proceedings. The cause of John of Gaunt's patronage of Wycliffe is involved in obscurity: but Wycliffe had been for some time known to the court as one of King Edward's chaplains; and when he went with the royal commissioners to Bruges, he was probably brought into frequent contact with the duke, who was the king's ambassador in that city. These two noblemen attempted to overawe the assembled prelates; and high words of scorn and defiance passed between them and Courtney, the bishop of London. The Earl Marshal demanded that Wycliffe should be seated, to which Courtney objected, as contrary to law and reason; and, in consequence of this, an altercation ensued between him and John of Gaunt, by no means creditable to the chivalry and courtesy of the latter, who insulted the bishop so grossly as to excite the assembled citizens to take his part. A tumult followed, in the course of which the duke's palace was destroyed by the rioters, and the result was, that the proceedings against Wycliffe were adjourned, and he escaped without censure.[1]

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[1] Le Bas, pp. 117. 124, 125.; Lewis, p. 34.

In the summer of the same year King Edward III. died; and the parliament of Richard II., which met in the following October, repeated the old complaint of the extortions practised by the Pope. So much money was at that time drawn out of the country by foreigners, that a grave question was raised in parliament, "Whether the kingdom of England, on an imminent necessity of its own defence, might lawfully detain the treasure of the kingdom, that it be not carried out of the land, although the Lord Pope required its being carried out on the pain of censures, and by virtue of the obedience due to him?"[2] This question is supposed to have arisen in consequence of the Pope's revival of the demand of the Peter-pence, the payment of which had been forbidden by King Edward III.; and the resolution of the doubt is said to have been referred to Wycliffe. Whether this was the case or not, a tract, which has been ascribed to him, justifies the retention of the tribute, both on the ground of the law of self-preservation, which required the nation's treasure to be retained for the national defence, and also, because a payment, such as this, which was in the nature of alms, could not reasonably be claimed by one who had already too much.[3]

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[1] Le Bas, pp. 126—130.

[2] Lewis, p. 55.

[3] Le Bas, pp. 130—132

Wycliffe was not permitted long to enjoy a respite from the attacks of his enemies, for, in November, 1377, four Papal bulls arrived in England, three of which were addressed to the primate Sudbury and the bishop of London, and the fourth to the University of Oxford. The prelates were directed to inform themselves privately, whether Wycliffe had taught any of the erroneous conclusions (nineteen in number) set forth in the schedule which accompanied the Papal rescripts. If it should turn out to be as represented, orders were given that in that case he should be apprehended and imprisoned ; that his confession should be taken, kept strictly concealed, and transmitted under seal to Rome ; and that he himself should be detained until further directions were received. The university were ordered to allow none in future to teach any of the said conclusions, and also to cause Wycliffe to be apprehended by the Pope's authority, and delivered to the custody of the two prelates. The same course was to be taken with all who opposed the execution of the bull, or were defiled with his errors.[1]

Upon the receipt of these instruments, the primate and Courtney proceeded at once to obey the Papal commands, declaring at the same time that they would not be turned aside by any threats or bribes, or the terror of death itself, from the performance of their duty. The university did not show an equal degree of zeal in the matter, and even debated whether they should not reject the Papal mandate altogether ; a course for which the rising spirit of the nation, as it had been shown in the recent complaints of the commons against the Papal exactions, seemed to afford a sufficient excuse. Upon this, the archbishop addressed to them a peremptory letter requiring prompt obedience; and the result was, that Wycliffe made his appearance early in 1378 before the Papal delegates, who held their court in the archbishop's chapel at Lambeth. On this second occasion the people again assembled in great numbers, to show their sympathy for the accused, and exhibited a degree of violence which alarmed the prelates. At the same time Sir Lewis Clifford appeared before the court, and in the name of the princess of Wales, the young king's mother, positively forbade the delegates to proceed to any definitive sentence against Wycliffe. So completely were their minds overawed by the violence of the multitude on the one hand, and the peremptory orders of the court on the other, that they were afraid to take any farther steps, and contented themselves with admonishing Wycliffe to abstain from repeating in his public teaching any of the censured conclusions.[1]

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[1] Lewis, pp. 50—53. ; Le Bas, pp. 136, 137.

It is true that Wycliffe, on this occasion, delivered a paper to the delegates containing an answer to the charges brought against him, and an explanation of his opinions upon the points in question; and another document of similar import, but with some variations, was presented by him to the parliament in April, 1378. This conduct of his had the effect, according to some writers, of deceiving his judges, and enabling them to receive his opinions as orthodox.[2] This view of the case, however, seems to be inconsistent with the injunction to silence imposed by the delegates; and it is difficult to believe that they were satisfied by explanations which contained, among other things, the following heretical proposition, as they must have considered it: — "To say that the Pope is accountable to God only, let him sin how he will, seems to me to imply that he is above the Church, the spouse of Christ, and, like Antichrist, figured, or represented, as lifting himself up above Christ." In another paper, put forth about the same time, although it has been controverted whether it was published before or after his appearance at Lambeth, Wycliffe uses much bolder language. He denounces, as blasphemous, the assertion that neither the Pope nor any one else can err in pretending to an unqualified power of binding and loosing; and he declares that Christians ought not to suffer one who utters such heresy and blasphemy to live upon the earth, and especially not to maintain him as their captain; and he adds, that if an angel from heaven should promulge the blasphemous opinion just mentioned, the faithful who hear the honour peculiar to their Lord unfaithfully usurped are unanimously, for the saving the faith, to make opposition to it.[1]

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[1] Le Bas, pp. 138—140.

[2] Walsingham, cited by Le Bas, p. 141.; Lingard, vol. iv. p. 189.

The vehemence with which Wycliffe denounces the Papal pretensions in the passage just quoted, savours too much of the intolerant and persecuting spirit of the times; while the language which he applies on the occasion that we are now considering, as on others, to the important subject of church endowments, has exposed him to censure on other grounds, as a defender of spoliation. The prevalent abuses of ecclesiastical property led him to point out, very truly, that that property was held on an implied condition (which the selfish and worldly ecclesiastics of the age perpetually forgot) that it was to be used to promote the temporal and eternal good of mankind. In setting forth this truth, he chose to designate all church property by the somewhat equivocal name of *alms*, as originating in voluntary bounty; and he held that, in cases of flagrant abuse or neglect, the revocation of the grants of secular possessions to the Church was not only within the power of the temporal authorities, but also became part of their duty.[2] In the paper presented to the delegates at Lambeth, he so far qualified this doctrine as to limit the forfeiture to cases allowed by the law. Nevertheless, his language in this document, as well as in other parts of his writings, is such as to have led some to the supposition that

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[1] Lewis, pp. 75. 77. 79.

[2] Le Bas, pp. 146, 147.

"by his system, all ecclesiastical possessions were marked out for spoliation."[1]

It may be proper to remark here upon another most objectionable doctrine imputed to Wycliffe, to which the paper presented to his judges refers, and on account of which some writers have made him in part responsible for the insurrection of the peasantry in 1381; viz., the notion that dominion is founded on grace. Although his language on this subject is open to censure, it does not appear that Wycliffe did propagate this doctrine to any extent among the people; and the insurrection in question is clearly to be traced to political causes, and, above all, to the intolerable pressure of the yoke of personal servitude on the necks of the peasantry. Wycliffe never acted the part of a political incendiary; and he cannot be considered as properly responsible for more than the act of opposing strongly the abuses of the Church, although his opposition, by loosening the bonds of ecclesiastical authority, may possibly have tended indirectly to weaken that of the civil power.[2]

The year 1378, which witnessed Wycliffe's triumphant escape from the hands of his enemies, was memorable in ecclesiastical history for the commencement of the great schism during which the Christian world was scandalised, for many years, by the exhibition of two rival Popes, one at Avignon, and one at Rome, each pretending to be the Vicar of Christ upon earth, and each denouncing, excommunicating, and stirring up war against the other and his adherents. The rivals had too much to do to think of Wycliffe, who, finding himself no longer under the necessity of assuming the defensive, boldly attacked the Papacy itself, in a tract entitled "The Schism of the Pope," in which he invited the sovereigns of Europe to seize the occasion for shaking to pieces the fabric of Romish dominion. "Trust we in the help of Christ," he says, "for He hath begun already to help us graciously, in that He hath cloven the head of Antichrist, and made the two parts fight against each other; for it cannot be doubtful that the sin of the Popes, which hath so long continued, hath brought in the division." In his sermons at Lutterworth he used the same boldness of language, and confidently denounced the dogmatic decisions of the Popes as the laws and judgments of Antichrist."

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[1] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 358.

[2] Lingard, vol. iv. p. 174.; Le Bas, pp. 177—181. 266—268.; Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. iii. p. 266.

It is pleasing to find, from the specimens of Wycliffe's parochial teaching which have been preserved, that he was not contented with destroying the mass of error which formed the principal part of the religion of the day, and which it seems no exaggeration to describe as the work of Antichrist. He endeavoured also most earnestly and most faithfully to set forth the pure Gospel, separated from the mass of rubbish with which it had been so long overlaid. At all times he appealed to the Holy Scriptures exclusively as the authority for what he taught; and, following their guidance, he instructed his people that pardon of sin was to be obtained, not (as the popular theology of the day would have led them to suppose) by the good offices of the saints, or the maternal influence of the Virgin Mary, but through that name "which is the only name under heaven given whereby we may be saved." While he pointed to the Saviour's death as the only means by which man's redemption was accomplished, he drew this practical inference, "That we should follow after Christ in His blessed passion — that we should keep ourselves from sin hereafter, and gather a devout mind from him."[1]

Nor were these doctrines, so new and strange to the men of that age, confined within the walls of Lutterworth church or the schools of Oxford. The success of the mendicant orders had shown to the world what could be effected by the powerful instrument of popular preaching. It was evident that what had been used in the cause of error, to prop up the falling dominion of the Papacy, might be employed with success on the side of truth, and to extend Christ's kingdom upon earth. The same sort of itinerant eloquence that had formerly deceived the people with legendary tales, and lying wonders, and the impostures of indulgences, might be employed to win souls to Christ, to teach men "words whereby they might be saved," to bid "every one that thirsted to come unto the waters," and "buy without money and without price" that inestimable treasure which was "able to make them wise unto salvation." This was the origin of what were called "Wycliffe's Poor Priests," a set of itinerant preachers, who went through all parts of the kingdom, barefoot and clad in russet gowns, with the sanction and encouragement of Wycliffe, but without any license or authority from the bishops. They were like the mendicant friars in their vagrant mode of life and their professed renunciation of worldly comforts, as well as in their dependence on voluntary contributions for subsistence, although they did not adopt the practice of begging.[1] But Wycliffe trusted, for the success of his principles, to a far more powerful weapon than popular preaching. As his own doctrine professed to be based on Holy Scripture, it was of vital importance that his hearers should have the power of judging of its truth by reference to the sacred volume. This led to his translating the Bible into the English tongue, which may be considered the most important act of the Reformer's public life. This translation was first published in 1380; and in an age when printing was still unknown copies were multiplied by the aid of transcribers, and were made known by the preaching of the poor priests. The work was, indeed, in one respect, imperfect, that it was a version of the Latin translation of the Bible, not of the Hebrew and Greek originals. But, notwithstanding this, it was an inestimable gift to a people ignorant of all languages but their own. It is difficult to describe the importance of this achievement of Wycliffe in better language than that of a modern Roman Catholic historian, though, in accordance with the principles of his Church, no friend to the free circulation of the Scriptures among the people:—"The new translation, in the hands of the poor preachers, became an engine of wonderful power. Men were flattered by the appeal to their private judgment: the new doctrines insensibly acquired partisans and protectors in the higher classes, who alone were acquainted with the use of letters; a spirit of inquiry was generated; and the seeds were sown of that religious revolution which, in little more than a century, astonished and convulsed the nations of Europe."[1]

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[1] Le Bas, pp. 153—159.

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[1] Le Bas, p. 281.

The same writer states, on the authority of Sir Thomas More, that several versions of the sacred writings were even then extant, although not accessible to the generality of readers; and he considers that the peculiarity of Wycliffe's work consisted in the attempt to diffuse the knowledge of the sacred writings more widely among the people. Recent inquiries have, however, made it very questionable, whether a complete version of the whole Bible in English was ever attempted before Wycliffe's translation appeared.[2] At all events, the right of free access to the Holy Scriptures, though strongly asserted by the most eminent divines of the Anglo-Saxon Church, was, for some centuries before the time of Wycliffe, almost, if not altogether, unknown in England. The Church of Rome had, by the atrocious canons of the Council of Toulouse, set her seal to the doctrine that even the possession of the holy volume in the language of his native country is a crime in a Christian layman. Hence we find the following strange absurdities gravely put forth by a zealous cotemporary of Wycliffe, the historian Knighton. "Christ committed the Gospel to the clergy and doctors of the Church, that they might minister it to the laity and weaker persons, according to the exigency of times and the wants of men. But this master John Wycliffe translated it out of Latin into English, and by that means laid it more open to the laity and to women who could read, than it used to be to the most learned of the clergy, and those of them who had the best understanding: and so the Gospel pearl is cast abroad, and trodden under foot of swine; and that which used to be precious to both clergy and laity, is made, as it were, the common jest of both; and the jewel of the Church is turned into the sport of the people; and what was before the *chief talent* of the clergy and doctors of the Church, is made for ever *common* to the laity."[1]

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[1] Lingard, vol. iv. p. 196.

[2] Le Bas, p. 166.

The clergy and doctors, to whom this writer supposes that the key of this sacred treasure was committed, were, it appears, not unwilling to permit a certain degree of access to it, under certain conditions, to persons of rank and education. Thus we find archbishop Arundel, in a sermon delivered not long after Wycliffe's death, at the funeral of Anne of Bohemia, Richard II.'s queen, mentioning it as a matter to be praised, that "she constantly studied the four gospels in English, with the expositions of the doctors."[2]

But this was a very different thing from allowing all who could read to have the free use of the holy volume. That such a notion was utterly opposed to the views of the English prelates may be inferred from the following facts, which happened after Wycliffe's death. 1. A bill was actually brought into the House of Lords to forbid the perusal of the Bible in English by the laity; and it might perhaps have passed into a law, but for the strenuous opposition of John of Gaunt, who declared "that the people of England would not be the dregs of all men, seeing all nations besides them had the Scriptures in their own tongue."[1]

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[1] Le Bas, p. 169.

[2] Ibid. p. 305.

2. It was ordered by a constitution of archbishop Arundel, published at Oxford in 1408, that, thenceforth, no one should translate any text of sacred Scripture, by his own authority, into the English or any other tongue, by way of book or treatise; and that no publication of this sort, composed in the time of John Wycliffe, or since, or thereafter to be composed, should be read, either in whole or in part, in public or in private, under the penalty of the greater excommunication, until such translation should be approved by the diocesan of the place.[2]

On the other hand, whatever excuse may be made for the cowardice or ignorance of those spiritual leaders who would have kept the people in perpetual darkness, the reasons alleged by Wycliffe himself in the following passages, for giving the Scriptures to the laity, seem unanswerable. "Christ and His Apostles converted the most part of the world, by making known to them the Scripture, in a language which was familiar to the people; for, for this purpose did the Holy Spirit give them the knowledge of all tongues. Why, therefore, ought not the modern disciples of Christ to collect fragments from the same loaf, and, as they did, clearly and plainly to open the Scriptures to the people, that they may know them? Besides, since according to the faith which the Apostle teaches, all Christians "must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ," and be answerable to Him for all the goods with which He has entrusted them, it is necessary that all the faithful should know these goods, and the use of them, that their answer may then be open; for an answer by a prelate or attorney will not then avail, but every one must then answer in his own person."[1]

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[1] Lewis, p. 84.

[2] Johnson, vol. ii. p. 466. The greater excommunication differed from the lesser by excluding a person from the society and conversation of the faithful, whereas the latter only deprived him of the use of sacraments and divine offices.

The assertion of the principle here maintained, has been of unspeakable importance to the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind, by assisting in delivering them from the thraldom of superstition, and the degradation of having their consciences enslaved by a mean submission to the dictates of a supposed infallible judge. The Christian scheme implies the exercise of the right of private judgment, to which the Apostle himself enjoined an appeal, when he required that "every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind;" and, though it is easy to point to the abuse of that right as a reason for suppressing it, the argument is of no more value than if we were to assert the necessity of submitting to a despotism, because of the excesses which have sometimes disgraced the name of liberty. Such a right, when properly understood, does not lead to a rejection of all authority, any more than the acknowledgment of the existence of natural rights leads to the rejection of the restraint of laws and government. Seeing that we are moral and responsible creatures living in a state of probation, we must be held responsible for the use of the greatest of all talents, that which enables us to know the things of God and become wise unto salvation. Wycliffe, in asserting our responsibility for all the goods entrusted to us, may be considered as having maintained this principle in the fullest sense. And whatever questionable matter may be found in his writings, for this, at all events, he deserves the highest honour and praise of all future generations of Englishmen, that, in an age of spiritual darkness and tyranny, he boldly claimed for all Christian men and women, old and young, the indefeasible, though long-suppressed, right of studying in their native tongue the text of Holy Writ.[1] He first, among mediæval English teachers, set the example of appealing exclusively to the sacred oracles, instead of trusting to the dogmatic decrees of Popes, or the contentious disputations of synods of fallible men. He first laid open to the wayfaring traveller that living fountain, which had hitherto been the exclusive possession of a privileged few, who doled it out drop by drop to the perishing multitude around them; he made it to be indeed, to all who could approach it, a "well of water, springing up unto everlasting life."

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[1] Lewis, p. 87.

And, though his enemies succeeded for a while in proscribing his great work, they were unable altogether to extinguish it. Such diligence was used in the propagation of copies of his translation among all classes of the people (a task of no small difficulty in an age which knew not the wonderful powers of the press), that they multiplied to an extent which defied the power of his adversaries to suppress them. So precious was the sacred volume to those who could read it, that the cost of a copy of Wycliffe's Testament, in 1429, was 2*l.* 16*s.* 8*d.*, equal to about 30*l.* of our money. Those who could not give money, would give a load of hay for a few favourite chapters, and this in times when the possession of such a manuscript might very probably be the means of bringing the owner to the dungeon or to the stake. They were forced to hide their treasure under the floors of their houses, and sit up all night, or retire to the lonely fields and woods, to hear and read without interruption, the words of the Book of Life. And, notwithstanding the utmost efforts of persecution, a faithful few persevered, for the space of nearly 150 years, in obeying God rather than man, and continued to seek comfort in secret from the study of His Holy Word, until the dawn of a happier day, which witnessed the issue of a royal proclamation for the free use of the Bible in the mother tongue.[1]

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[1] Lewis, p. 89.

We have hitherto seen Wycliffe engaged in struggles, in which he was aided by very powerful support. In his resistance to the Papacy he had the countenance and favour of the highest persons in the realm, kings, princes, and nobles being his patrons and admirers; in his opposition to the friars, and his exposure of the vices of the clergy, he was encouraged by the strongest popular sympathies, and the general approbation of all classes of his countrymen. The case, however, was altogether different when he came to attack that mysterious dogma, which the subtlety of scholastic metaphysicians had invented to confound the simple student of Holy Writ, under the name of Transubstantiation. Against the jargon of contradictions with which the friars had attempted to render this mysterious subject still more obscure, Wycliffe openly testified, in 1381, by maintaining in the schools of Oxford what he had already declared in his sermons at Lutterworth. He put forth twelve conclusions, containing, among other things, the assertions that "the consecrated host we see upon the altar, is neither Christ, nor a part of Him, but an effectual sign of Him; and that transubstantiation, identification, and impanation, rest on no Scriptural grounds."[2] This was considered by the religious orders at Oxford, as an actual declaration of war; and immediately a convention of doctors was summoned by William de Berton the chancellor, eight of whom were either monks or mendicants. This assembly unanimously promulgated a decree which, after reciting the conclusions of Wycliffe, proceeded to affirm the doctrine of transubstantiation to the fullest extent, and denounced the penalties of imprisonment, suspension from scholastic exercises, and the greater excommunication, against all who taught or listened to his doctrines on the subject.[1]

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[1] Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, vol. i. pp. 418, 419.; Collier, vol. v. pp. 52, 53.

[2] Lewis, p. 91.

When this decree was made known to Wycliffe as he was publicly lecturing in the schools, he was at first confounded by the suddenness of the attack; but recovering himself, he defied his adversaries to refute his opinions, and announced his intention of appealing from their decree, not to his bishop or to the Pope, but to the king. This assertion of the supremacy of the sovereign in matters of faith and doctrine, seems, at first sight, something new and unprecedented. Although in Anglo-Saxon times the kings had personally presided in ecclesiastical synods, this practice had not been continued by their Norman successors, the wisest and most vigorous of whom had contented themselves with claiming a right to control all persons and things ecclesiastical within the realm, leaving to ecclesiastics the decision of questions of a purely spiritual nature. Possibly Wycliffe may have grounded his appeal on the temporal penalties denounced by the chancellor's decree, against which he might fairly claim the aid of the supreme power of the state; but it seems more probable, that he hoped by this proceeding to secure the support of the duke of Lancaster, which had before been so serviceable to his cause. If this, however, was his object, he was disappointed, as the duke, on hearing of his appeal, went to Oxford and forbade him to speak any more on the subject; and so Wycliffe, being deprived of the patronage of the great, was left to struggle as by the help of God he best might, against the malice of his powerful adversaries.[2]

Before the appeal came on to be heard, archbishop Sudbury was murdered by the insurgent populace, and was succeeded, by virtue of a Papal provision, by Courtney, bishop of London. The change was by no means favourable to Wycliffe's prospects, as Sudbury's reputed opposition to some of the worst abuses of the Church seems to mark him as a moderate Romanist, while Courtney was a bigoted partisan of the Papacy.[1]

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[1] Lewis, pp. 95, 96.

[2] Ibid, p. 99.

As soon as the new primate had obtained his pall, he lost no time in summoning a synod of divines, to consider the doctrines of Wycliffe and his followers. As this assembly, which met at the Priory of the Preaching Friars in London, in May, 1382, was commencing its deliberations, the shock of an earthquake was felt. Courtney with wonderful presence of mind revived the spirits of those members of the synod who were alarmed at the ill omen, by interpreting it as a sign that, as noxious vapours were expelled from the earth, so peace and purity were to be restored to the Church by the violent removal of rebellious spirits from her communion. The assembly then proceeded to pass sentence upon twenty-four conclusions, said to be derived from Wycliffe's writings, ten of which were condemned as heretical, and fourteen as erroneous. The heretical propositions related chiefly to Wycliffe's doctrine of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to the forfeiture of episcopal and priestly functions by deadly sin, the uselessness of auricular confession, the derivation of the Papal power from the emperor, and the duty of rejecting the Papal authority after the death of Urban VI., and the unlawfulness of the possession of temporal property by ministers; and among them was included the absurd blasphemy ascribed to Wycliffe by his enemies, that God ought to obey the devil. Of the erroneous propositions the principal were, that it was heretical for a prelate to excommunicate a man, unless he knew him to be excommunicated of God, and treasonable to excommunicate one who had appealed to the king; that it was lawful for any man to preach the word of God, without license of Pope or prelate; that tithes are pure alms, and may be withheld from delinquent priests, and that such priests may be stripped of their endowments by the temporal power; that to give alms to friars is an excommunicable offence; and that the religious orders, whether endowed or mendicant, are sinful and unchristian.[1]

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[1] Sudbury is said to have protested strongly against the religious folly of making pilgrimages to Becket's shrine. See Lewis's Pecock, p. 66.

The decree, by which these propositions were condemned, was signed by the primate and six other bishops, of whom the celebrated William of Wykeham, bishop of Winchester, was one; by fourteen doctors of civil or canon law, together with seventeen doctors and six bachelors of divinity, all of whom, except two, belonged to the mendicant orders.[2] Instructions were then despatched to the bishops of London and Lincoln, commanding them to take steps for the suppression of the proscribed doctrines and the excommunication of those who maintained them; and the latter prelate, as Wycliffe's diocesan, issued his letters mandatory to the clerical and monastic authorities within the archdeaconry of Leicester, in which Lutterworth was situated, for the execution of these orders. A similar mandate was directed by the primate to one Peter Stokes, a zealous Carmelite, of Oxford, enjoining him to warn the members of the university to abstain from teaching or listening to any of the condemned conclusions, on pain of the greater excommunication. An attempt was made, at the same time, to rouse the religious feelings of the metropolis by a solemn procession of clergy and laity, walking barefoot, to St. Paul's, after which a sermon was preached by another Carmelite on the perils of the Church.[3] The bishops also concurred in petitioning the king to provide against the errors of the persons whom they called Lollards; an appellation from this time forward applied constantly to the followers of Wycliffe, and indeed to all who were supposed to conceal heresy or vicious conduct under the mask of piety.[1] The chief doctrines complained of in this petition, in addition to those before condemned, were, that Urban VI. is not the successor of St. Peter, but the son of Antichrist, and that there has not been a true Pope since the time of St. Silvester; that neither the Pope nor any bishop can grant indulgences, and that those who trust in such indulgences are cursed; that the Pope's canons and decretals are not binding; that the worship of images and pictures by pilgrimage or burning of lights, or otherwise, is idolatrous and accursed; that pictures of the Holy Trinity ought not to be made; that we ought not to supplicate the saints for their intercession; that priests and deacons are under an obligation to preach, even if they have not the cure of souls; that the clergy who do not minister the sacraments, ought to be removed; and, lastly, that "ecclesiastical men ought not to ride on such great horses, nor use so large jewels, precious garments, or delicate entertainments, but to renounce them all, and give them to the poor, walking on foot, and, taking staves in their hands, to take on them the appearance of poor men, giving others examples by their conversation."[2]

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[1] Lewis, pp. 106—109.; Le Bas, p. 192—194.

[2] Collier, vol. iii. p. 160.

[3] Lewis, pp. 109—111.

In consequence of this petition a royal ordinance was issued, empowering sheriffs of counties to arrest preachers of erroneous doctrines, who, it was said, preached in churches, churchyards, markets, fairs, and other open places, without the license of the ordinary, and to detain such persons in prison until they should justify themselves according to law and reason of Holy Church.[3] This ordinance never had the force of law, because it did not receive the assent of parliament, although, by a fraudulent proceeding of which other traces exist in our early records, it was entered in the roll of parliament among the statutes of the year. Of this fraud the commons, in the next parliament, formally complained to the king, and requested that the supposed statute might be annulled, to which request the king assented. "Nevertheless," says Mr. Hallam, "the pretended statute was untouched, and remains still among our laws unrepealed, except by desuetude and by inference from the acts of much later times."[1]

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[1] Mosheim derives the term from an old German word, signifying a singer of sacred songs, vol. ii. pp. 636—638.

[2] Lewis, pp. 104, 105.

[3] Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, vol. i. pp. 223, 224.

The power, however, illegal as it was, which this ordinance conferred, was sufficient for the purpose of the primate, who, assuming the title of "Inquisitor of heretical pravity," proceeded to take vigorous measures for the suppression of the proscribed opinions. He wrote to the chancellor of the university of Oxford (who was himself suspected of favouring the condemned conclusions), forbidding him to allow any person in future to maintain or preach them publicly in the schools or elsewhere, or to admit Wycliffe, or any of the persons named in the letter as suspected of heresy, to preach or perform any exercise in the schools, until they had purged themselves of the charge. A royal letter was also directed to the chancellor and proctors of the university, by which they were appointed inquisitors general, with an injunction that, if they knew any persons within their jurisdiction who were suspected of heresy, or found any who were so bold as to receive into their houses, or hold any communication with, or show any favour to Wycliffe, or any other person suspected of holding any of the condemned opinions, they should banish them from the university within seven days.[2]

Notwithstanding the chancellor's unwillingness to assist in this inquisition, Courtney succeeded in compelling the attendance of the chief of Wycliffe's adherents before the synod at the Preaching Friars, which pronounced their tenets to be heretical, and passed sentence of excommunication against them.[1] Wycliffe, however, was not cited before this tribunal, on account, as has been supposed, of his previous appeal to the crown, pending which it might seem disrespectful for any inferior court to take proceedings against him, with reference to the heresies imputed to him by the Oxford decree.[2] In November, 1382, he presented his complaint, which was addressed, not to the king alone, but to the king and parliament. In this document he takes occasion to bring before the legislature, in the shape of four articles, some of the main principles to the advocacy of which he had devoted his life. The object of the first is to expose the absurdity of the fundamental principle of all religious orders, which implied that a more perfect rule of life could be laid down than that delivered by the Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles. The second enforces the power of the secular magistrate over the temporal endowments of the Church. The third maintains that prelates and priests incur, by covetousness, simony, and other gross sin, a forfeiture of tithes and offerings, which, in that case, may lawfully be given to the poor. The fourth is the only one which relates to the Eucharist; and he merely prays that "Christ's teaching of the sacrament of his own body, that is plainly taught by Christ and his Apostles, may be taught openly in churches of Christian people." His complaint concludes with a protest against the selfishness of the priesthood, "who were so busy about worldly occupation, that they seemed better bailiffs or reeves than ghostly priests of Jesus Christ."[3]

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[1] Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. iii. pp. 132, 133.

[2] Lewis, pp. 114, 115. 360. 363.; Le Bas, p. 197.; Townsend. Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 686.

The parliament was a body utterly incompetent to deal with such points as those to which the complaint referred, and Wycliffe obtained no further assistance from them, except that they proceeded to demand of the king the abrogation of the illegal ordinance respecting the arrest of preachers. For the opinions expressed in the articles of his complaint, he was quickly summoned to answer before the convocation at Oxford. The chief point alleged against him was his doctrine of the Lord's Supper; and with respect to this he could neither rely on the favour of the duke of Lancaster, who plainly refused to go along with him into such mysterious points of controversy, nor on the sympathies of the populace.

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[1] Lewis, pp. 259. 263.

[2] Le Bas, p. 198.

[3] Le Bas, pp 198—200.

Under these circumstances it has been said by his enemies that, finding himself deprived of the powerful patronage of the duke, "he laid aside his audacious bearing and attempted to disclaim his extravagant and fantastic errors; and protested that the follies he was called upon to answer for, were basely and falsely ascribed to him by the malicious ingenuity of his enemies."[1] To judge of the truth of this charge, we must consider the two confessions of faith, one in English and the other in Latin, which he laid before the convocation in his defence.

The former is tolerably clear in its language; and seeing that it is expressed in the vernacular tongue, it may be taken to affirm what he meant to convey to the popular understanding upon the subject. In this he declares that the sacrament of the altar is *very God's body in form of bread;* and that if it be broken into three parts or into a thousand, every one of them is the same God's body; and, he adds, that it is heresy to believe that this sacrament is God's body and no bread, since it is both together; in *its kind* very bread, and *sacramentally* God's body. And he scruples not to call the notion of the sacrament being an accident without a substance, a heresy, and to say that the earth trembled on the occasion of the assembly at the Preaching Friars, in testimony of God's anger at the heresies maintained by his judges.[1] These declarations seem sufficient to refute the charge of cowardice, as well as the notion that he attempted to disclaim his opinions. And though the assertion of the body of Christ being present in every fragment of the consecrated bread may seem to indicate a belief in a corporeal presence, it does not necessarily imply more than this, that, however minutely the sacramental elements be divided, each portion is equally efficacious in conveying to the communicants the benefits of Christ's body.[2]

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[1] Knighton, cited by Le Bas, p. 202.; see also Lingard, vol. iv. p. 191.

On the other hand, it must be admitted, that the Latin confession is for the most part an incomprehensible document. Whether it was intentionally so expressed, in order to baffle his opponents, or whether his skill in the scholastic argumentations of the age became in this case a snare to Wycliffe's better judgment, it is superfluous now to inquire. It is sufficient to observe, that even in this he appears to come to nearly the same conclusion as in the English confession, viz., that "the venerable sacrament of the altar is naturally bread and wine, but sacramentally the body and blood of Christ." So far is this document from giving any evidence of his having "laid aside his audacity," that at the conclusion of it the notion of the friars, of the sacrament being an accident without a subject, is denounced as a fiction of the priests of Baal.[3]

That neither of the confessions was considered by his judges to amount to a recantation, is evident from the fact that they immediately drew forth replies from six several antagonists.[4] Nevertheless it was thought that it would be inexpedient to proceed to any extremities against him, although the reasons for such forbearance are not recorded. It seemed to be sufficient to put a stop to the farther propagation of his opinions in the university, by obtaining letters from the king, banishing him from Oxford. He then retired to his parsonage at Lutterworth, where he remained undisturbed by persecution during the short remnant of his life. Previously to this he had been seized with a paralytic attack, to which he is supposed to allude in a letter addressed about this time by him to Pope Urban VI., in reply to a summons to appear before that pontiff, and answer a charge of heresy. In this remarkable document he professes his readiness to give an account of his faith to all true men, and especially to the Pope, whom he acknowledges as the highest vicar that Christ has on earth; adding, however, that his greatness is not to be estimated by worldly dignity, but by his more exact conformity to Christ in virtuous living, who, while on earth, was the poorest of men "both in spirit and in having." He also expresses his opinion, that no man ought to follow the Pope, except so far as he followed Christ, and that it was wholesome counsel that the Pope should leave his worldly lordship unto worldly lords, and move speedily all his clergy to do the same. If this opinion were found erroneous, he was willing to be amended, even by death, if it were needful. If he might travel in his own person, he would with God's will go to the Pope; but Christ had needed him otherwise, and to Christ it became both him and the Pope to submit, unless the Pope were willing to set up openly for Antichrist.[1]

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[1] Lewis, pp. 102—104.

[2] Le Bas, pp. 203—205.

[3] Lewis, pp. 102. 323—332.; Le Bas, 205, 206.

[4] Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, vol. i. p. 212, note.

His paralytic seizure did not incapacitate him either for parochial duty, or for the labours of his pen, in which he continued constantly employed for two years longer. It was during this period that Henry Spencer, bishop of Norwich, led an army into Flanders, in support of the crusade in behalf of Urban VI. This mad project stirred up

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[1] Lewis, p. 333; Le Bas, p. 208, 209.

Wycliffe's zeal to expose, in the strongest language of censure, the folly and wickedness of its authors; and in one of his works, published at this time, he complains that the Pope brought "the seal and banner of Christ on the Cross, that is the token of peace, mercy, and charity, for to slay all Christian men, for love of two false priests that were open Antichrists."[1] Although the boldness of his language was sufficient to attract the notice of his enemies, and to expose him to imminent danger of martyrdom, he was permitted to end his days in peace. At length a second stroke of paralysis brought to him his final summons, at Lutterworth, in December 1384, in the sixty-first year of his age, while he was engaged in the public ministrations of his holy office.[2]

In estimating the true value of this remarkable man's work as a reformer of the English Church, we ought perhaps to regard him in the light of a pioneer for others, whose office it was to clear away the mass of rubbish, that had been accumulated in the Church through the corruptions of ages. In performing this task, he dealt his blows around him with indiscriminate violence, and occasionally, in aiming at an abuse, he assailed what was praiseworthy and beneficial. Thus the covetousness of the higher clergy of his day, and the misemployment of their revenues, led him to regard all Church-endowments as inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity. Hence those crude and ill-digested notions, that such endowments are forfeited in case of abuse or neglect, and that tithes are pure alms, which may be withheld from the unworthy minister,—notions, which, however they may be explained away, appear to afford encouragement to the schemes of those who would appropriate ecclesiastical revenues for common purposes. It is true that Wycliffe's opinions on this subject did not prevent him from holding preferment himself, and therefore we may conclude that he did not object to others enjoying the revenues of the Church, provided they administered them faithfully according to the intentions of the donors. Nevertheless, the manner in which he called for reform, in cases where there was evident abuse, lays him open to the charge of being a patron of revolutionary schemes of plunder, which he perhaps never seriously contemplated. Similar observations may be made with respect to his views of the episcopal office. The bishops of his time, many of them, deserved ample censure for their immorality and unworthy conduct; and yet it did not follow that his conclusion was correct, that no bishop living in mortal sin was to be considered a bishop at all.[1] The whole machinery of cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, and other Church officers, he considered cumbrous, and intended to promote what he called "Cæsarean pomp," rather than the edification of the Church. Such a view, however, afforded no justification for the notions that episcopacy was not a primitive institution, that the necessity of obtaining the bishop's license for preaching within a diocese was a hinderance to the lawful exercise of the priest's functions, and that the reservation of the office of confirmation to bishops alone was a delusion, imposed for the purpose of unduly advancing the importance and dignity of the episcopal order.[2]

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[1] Lewis, pp. 120, 121.

[2] Le Bas, pp. 217—219.

In these opinions, as in his stern denunciation of Church music, and other matters, he appears before us in the character of a prototype of the Puritan opponents of the Church of England in the days of Elizabeth; and it has been observed, with an appearance of truth, that had Wycliffe been permitted to remodel the Church according to his views, he would, in all probability, have anticipated the labours of

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[1] Le Bas. p. 259.

[2] Lewis, pp. 155. 157. 167.

Calvin, and the English Reformation would have assumed the character of the Protestantism of Geneva.[1]

On the other hand, while he protested strongly against some of the erroneous doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome, as the intercession of saints, auricular confession, indulgences, the compulsory celibacy of the clergy, and the abuse of excommunications, there were others which he unquestionably maintained.[2] Among these may be reckoned a qualified recognition of the supremacy of the Pope, as "Christ's highest vicar upon earth." Perhaps, however, we should not attach much importance to what was rather a respect for the abstract idea of a Pope, than any thing else, since it did not prevent him from denouncing the actual Pope, as "the worldly priest of Rome, the most accursed of cutpurses, the evil manslayer, and burner of the servants of Christ."[3] He certainly retained the article of Purgatory in his creed; he allowed masses and prayers for the dead (with a protest against the abuse of them for purposes of covetousness), and also a qualified use of images. He also acknowledged seven sacraments, though he probably did not attribute the same sense to the term which is given in our formularies, while in the ordinance of penance he distinctly denied to the priest any but a purely ministerial function.[4]

There are two points of doctrine with respect to which Wycliffe has been censured by Melancthon and other Protestant writers as unsound, or at least defective, viz., the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and justification by faith.[5] With respect to the former of these subjects we have already observed, that his language is obscure and confused, and therefore, perhaps, open to suspicion. On the other hand, it seems clear that he denied all change in the nature of the elements, and in particular refuted the sophistical distinctions of the friars upon the subject; although he did believe that some change took place by consecration, which warrants us in saying that Christ's body is *really* present in the Holy Eucharist, but in a figurative and sacramental manner.[1]

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[1] Le Bas, p. 274.

[2] Lewis, pp. 163. 168—171. 173.; Le Bas, pp. 245. 246.

[3] Le Bas, p. 248.

[4] Le Bas, pp. 243, 244. 254.; Lewis, pp. 168. 175.

[5] Lewis, p. 140.; Milner's Church History, cent. xiv. chap. 3.

The charge, with respect to unsoundness upon the doctrine of justification, seems to rest upon no other ground than this, that he did not, like the Reformers of the 16th century, make that doctrine the test of a standing or falling Church. It is not easy to see how such a charge can be fairly maintained against one who taught "that the merit of Christ was of itself sufficient to redeem every man from hell, and that faith in Him was sufficient for our salvation;" and who led men "to trust wholly to Christ, to rely altogether upon His sufferings, and not to seek to be justified in any other way than by His righteousness."[2]

Wycliffe's great glory, and what entitles him to the lasting respect and gratitude of every Englishman who loves his Bible, was this, that he asserted the supremacy of the Holy Scripture, as an authority paramount to every other, whether derived from the dogmatic decisions of Popes and councils, or the traditions of the Fathers; and that he claimed for all Christian people, as an inalienable right, that they should have free access to those oracles, which were able to make them wise unto salvation, and on the right use of which their salvation depended.[3] These principles were, indeed, suppressed for a while, and their professors subjected to a cruel and exterminating persecution. Nevertheless, it was God's will that in His good time they should prevail in England, so as to afford a new accomplishment of the prophetic promise, "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."[1]

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[1] Le Bas, p. 259.

[2] Le Bas, p. 238.; Milner, ibid.

[3] Le Bas, pp. 253, 254.

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[1] Is. lv. 10, 11.

CHAP. XX.

THE ENGLISH CHURCH FROM THE DEATH OF WYCLIFFE TO THE END OF HENRY VII.'S REIGN.

ALTHOUGH Wycliffe had been permitted to die in peace in his own parish, a spirit of persecution was roused in England after his death, which raged with the utmost fury against his "poor priests" and their followers, and the ecclesiastical records of the succeeding century are chiefly occupied with the sufferings of the Lollards. Nor was the malignant spirit which unhappily actuated the supporters of the corruptions of the Church, contented with racking and imprisoning the bodies of Wycliffe's followers; it prompted them to violate the sanctuary of the tomb, and to disturb the remains of the great Reformer from what ought to have been their final resting-place.

It appears that his writings and opinions were extensively circulated in Bohemia, chiefly, as it is supposed, by means of the attendants of Richard II.'s Queen Anne, who was a Bohemian princess. The extent and magnitude of the influence ascribed to his works may be estimated by the fact that Subinco Lupus, bishop of Prague, is reported to have consigned 200 of them to the flames for the purpose of extirpating heresy. The admiration in which they were held by the Bohemian Reformers, Huss and Jerome of Prague, naturally provoked the vengeance of the Council of Constance, which persecuted those Reformers to the death. Accordingly, this Council, which met in 1414, thirty years after Wycliffe's death, selected forty-five articles from his writings which it declared heretical, and then, after solemnly condemning his memory, issued an order that his body and bones, if they might be discerned and known from those of the faithful, should be taken from the ground and thrown away from the burial of any church."[1] It was not till thirteen years more had elapsed that orders were issued from the Papal court for the carrying this atrocious decree into effect, and by a singular fatality, which seems so frequently to attend the course of apostates, the person chosen for its execution was Richard Fleming, bishop of Lincoln, formerly a zealous adherent of Wycliffe, but then a bitter destroyer of the faith which once he preached. Under this man's directions the remains were disinterred and burnt, and the ashes cast into an adjoining brook called the Swift, a tributary of the Avon. Upon this the historian Fuller quaintly remarks: "Thus this brook hath conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over."[2]

The persecution of the poor preachers and others of Wycliffe's followers had commenced even in the Reformer's lifetime; and Courtney was the first English primate who assumed the title and played the part of an Inquisitor. His first proceedings against the persons summoned before the synod at the Preaching Friars' on the charge of heresy were attended with success. The two most eminent of them for learning and ability were Nicholas Hereford and Philip Repingdon. Both of these were induced afterwards to abjure their opinions, and some years later received high preferment in the Church; the former being appointed by the Crown in 1394 to the chancellorship of Hereford, and the latter being raised in 1405 by Papal provision to the see of Lincoln, and afterwards to the dignity of a cardinal.[3]

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[1] Lewis, p. 137.; Le Bas, 234.

[2] Church History, cent. xv. lib. iv.

[3] Lewis, pp. 261. 267.; Le Bas, pp. 295, 296.

Another of the most eminent of Wycliffe's supporters was John Aston, a Master of Arts of Oxford, the most energetic and untiring of the poor preachers. Knighton the historian describes him as travelling every where on foot with a staff in hand, and visiting all the churches in the kingdom; and compares him to a watchdog ready to bark at every noise, and a bee ever on the wing. When summoned before the synod at the Preaching Friars', he was required by the archbishop to address the court in Latin lest his statements should mislead the bystanders, but he fearlessly refused to comply with the injunction, and so determined was his conduct that it was found necessary to hasten the proceedings in order to pronounce the sentence of excommunication against him. Notwithstanding this intrepid beginning, it seems that Aston yielded at length to the infirmity of the flesh, and was restored by the archbishop to the school exercises in consideration of his having retracted and anathematised his heretical opinions.[1]

John Purney or Purvey, another itinerant preacher of the same stamp, was a personal friend and companion of Wycliffe, and a vehement opponent of the mendicant orders. After a long impunity he fell, in 1396, into the hands of archbishop Arundel, and was compelled by cruel tortures to recant. After this, it seems, he received a benefice from that prelate, and, if we are to believe Arundel's statement, distinguished himself by his severity in the exaction of his tithes. It has been supposed that he afterwards retracted his recantation, as he was imprisoned a second time by archbishop Chicheley in 1421, and that he died in prison.[2]

To this list of itinerant apostles of Wycliffe's opinions, who disgraced their profession by a like cowardice, must be added the name of William Swinderby, represented by the cotemporary historian as a man of inconstant temper and unsettled habits. At one time preaching with the utmost vehemence against the sins of those around him, at another time living the life of a recluse, and then resuming itinerant habits again, he ended with publicly defying the bishop of Lincoln, who attempted to restrain him; and was saved from punishment only through the intercession of the duke of Lancaster, and on condition of his abjuring his opinions.[1]

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[1] Lewis, pp. 262—266.; Le Bas, p. 286.

[2] Lewis, pp. 267—270.; Le Bas, pp. 287, 288.; Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, vol. i. p. 278.

These wretched specimens of inconstancy on the part of some on whom the mantle of Wycliffe should have fallen, do not tend much to the credit of the system of a roving unlicensed ministry, by which he attempted to make up for the deficiencies of the established Church; a system for which nothing but the extreme corruption of the higher clergy could afford an excuse, and which seems utterly inconsistent with all ecclesiastical discipline. Nevertheless, such was the activity, zeal, and success of these itinerants in propagating the principles of their master, that, according to the confession of the cotemporary popish historian Knighton, "his disciples were multiplied like suckers from the root of a tree, and everywhere filled the compass of the kingdom."[2] Nor were these all merely temporary converts, but, as was afterwards abundantly shown, multitudes among them displayed a truly apostolic spirit in the hour of danger, and when the fiercest attacks of persecution came upon them, "loved not their lives unto the death." While we bear testimony to their merits, and protest against the unfairness with which they have been treated by some writers, we must admit that it would ill become a historian of the Church to defend all their principles. Nor can we deny that there was much in the temper and spirit of the Lollards that might justly alarm the government, and make well-disposed and peaceable members of society look with disgust upon opinions which seemed to partake of a levelling and seditious character.

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[1] Lewis, pp. 271—276; Le Bas, pp. 289, 290.

[2] Ibid. p. 298.

Before the death of archbishop Courtney, which took place in 1396, the power and influence of the Lollards had increased to a formidable extent: they had then probably so far separated from the established Church as to have religious conventicles of their own, and schools for the education of their youth in their own principles.[1] In 1394 they ventured to present a petition to parliament in the form of twelve conclusions, denouncing with great boldness of language some of the false doctrines and erroneous practices of the Church, and containing some very questionable assertions with respect to the unlawfulness of war and capital punishments, and also of some particular trades to which they objected as the occasion of pride and luxury. According to the testimony of the historian Walsingham, they had the boldness to placard the gates of St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey with factious manifestoes and accusations against the clergy. These proceedings, which were encouraged by some men of rank, caused great commotion; a deputation, headed by Arundel, then archbishop of York, and the bishop of London, waited upon king Richard, who was in Ireland, to urge that monarch to hasten home for the protection of the Church from her numerous assailants.[2] At the same time a letter from Pope Boniface IX. stirred up the zeal of Richard to oppose a determined front to the further progress of the new opinions among the higher classes. At length, in 1396, the succession of Arundel to the primacy gave a heavy blow to the opponents of the Church by placing their chief enemy in a position where he was able to act with the utmost vigour against them. Even while presiding over the province of York, that prelate had shown a degree of intolerance of all dissent which manifested plainly what was to be expected from him when invested with the power of the primate of all England.

A form of an oath has been preserved which was tendered by

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[1] Lewis's Pecock, p. 8.

[2] Collier, vol. iii. pp. 213—218.; Le Bas, p. 312.

Arundel as archbishop of York to certain Lollards, which shows the extent to which false doctrine prevailed in high places. According to this document he compelled them to swear that they would worship images with praying and offering unto them, as well as obey the laws of Holy Church, and abjure the teaching of the Lollards.[1] His proceedings as archbishop of Canterbury were not unworthy of his former reputation. One of his first acts was to procure from the convocation in London a condemnation of eighteen articles, extracted from a work of Wycliffe, called the Trialogus. His power of doing mischief was for a while suspended by his banishment for high treason; and Roger Walden was appointed by the Pope archbishop in his stead. When Henry of Lancaster succeeded in obtaining the throne in 1399, Arundel, who had been a zealous partizan of his cause, was restored to the archiepiscopal see, and Walden set aside by the same Papal authority which had made him archbishop.[2] The new king soon showed his gratitude to the power which had so ably supported him, by declaring himself the protector of the Church against the assaults of the Lollards. He sent a message to the convocation, directing them to take measures for the suppression of the errors disseminated by the itinerant preachers, and promised them the royal assistance in promoting so laudable an object.[3] The consequence was, that in the second year of King Henry IV. an act was passed, at the instigation of the clergy, for the protection of the Church and the suppression of the new sect, which has rendered this reign infamous in the ecclesiastical history of England.

Although the early Christian emperors fell into the error of employing the same carnal weapons against the enemies or corrupters of Christianity which had been used by their heathen predecessors against the professors of the faith, it does not appear that the Church directly sanctioned extreme measures of persecution before the 13th century. But the Council of Lateran in 1215 declared, that persons convicted of heresy "should be left to the secular power to be dealt with according to due form of law."[1] In England we find that burning was the punishment of apostasy, an offence to which the Christian emperors had also awarded the punishment of death in certain cases; and a person convicted of apostasy before an English synod suffered accordingly during the primacy of archbishop Langton.[2] The offence of heresy was by the common law liable to the same punishment; but then it was necessary that the accused should be first convicted before the archbishop in a provincial synod, and upon such conviction he might abjure his error, and so save his life. If, however, after abjuration, he relapsed into the same heresy, or fell into any other, and was convicted a second time before the same tribunal, his condemnation was pronounced, and he was delivered over to the king who might deal with him according to his pleasure. The king could pardon him if he thought fit to do so; but if not, the royal writ for the burning of a heretic issued (not as a matter of course, but by the special direction of the king) commanding the sheriff to commit the convicted person to the flames.[3]

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[1] Collier, vol. iii. pp. 218, 219.

Ibid. pp. 221—242.

[3] Lingard, vol. iv. 331.

The new statute, after describing the Lollards, and their manner of propagating their opinions, forbade the preaching in any diocese without license from the diocesan, to whom it gave the power of arresting and detaining in prison any who should preach, hold, or teach any doctrine, or write any book, contrary to the Catholic faith, or determination of Holy Church, or who should even be suspected of such preaching, teaching, or writing. Moreover, it took away the necessity of applying to the secular power at all, and left the accused entirely at the mercy of the bishops. Each diocesan, without the intervention of a synod, might convict a man of heresy, and put him upon his abjuration as before, and imprison him during pleasure. If he refused to abjure, or in case of a relapse and second conviction, the bishop might at once order the sheriff to consign him to the flames, and that officer was bound to obey the mandate, without waiting for the royal writ.[1]

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[1] Bingham, lib xvi. cap. 6.; Lingard, vol. iv. p. 330.

[2] Collier, vol. ii. p. 454.

[3] Blackstone, vol. iv 43—47.

The first victim after the passing of the new law (though his sentence was executed without reference to its provisions) was one Sawtre, a clergyman of London, who had already been convicted before the bishop of Norwich, of denying transubstantiation and refusing to worship the cross. He had been induced to recant his opinions upon these and some other points, but, being suspected of returning to them, he was summoned to answer before the convocation respecting the articles in question. He made some qualification with respect to the other matters, but he would not deny his belief that the sacramental bread remained unchanged after the words of consecration. Upon this he was asked whether he would stand by the determination of the Church in this matter; to which he replied that he would, if that determination were agreeable to the will of God. This answer being of course judged insufficient, he was declared a relapsed heretic, and was solemnly degraded from his orders, of the several symbols of which he was successively deprived, and his tonsure being shaven off and a lay habit put on him, he was finally delivered to the secular power, and burnt. Sawtre is stated by Fox, the martyrologist, to have been the first who suffered death for heresy in England, a fate which he endured with the utmost constancy.[2]

The vengeance of the persecutors was not confined to the teachers of heresy; even the most obscure professors were not thought too mean for martyrdom. An illiterate tailor, of the name of Badby, refusing to assent to Arundel's exposition of transubstantiation, was condemned to be burned. Prince Henry, afterwards Henry V., was accidentally present at the execution of the sentence, and earnestly entreated the unfortunate man to recant, but in vain. When the burning had proceeded to a certain point, and the prisoner was suffering the greatest agony, the prince again humanely interfered, and promised him life, pardon, and an allowance from the exchequer, if he would recant. It was all in vain; neither the persuasions nor the promises of the heir to the crown, on the one hand, nor the tortures of the most dreadful of deaths on the other, could avail anything to overpower the honest convictions of this humble artificer, or smother his testimony against unscriptural error.[1]

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[1] Collier, vol. iii. pp. 252, 253.; Blackstone, vol. iv. p. 47.

[2] Collier, pp. 259—262.; Lingard, vol. iv. p. 332.

The case of William Thorpe, who, after devoting thirty years to the work of preaching Wycliffe's doctrines, fell, in the year 1407, into the hands of archbishop Arundel, deserves our particular notice, on account of his having himself written a statement of what passed on the occasion of his examination before that prelate. This remarkable document sets forth, in the vernacular English of the time, the bold and faithful confession of a simple-hearted, pious man, who by trusting only in God's grace and the wisdom afforded him through the study of Holy Scripture, was able to confound the mighty even in the judgment seat. The coarse brutality of the archbishop's language is such as to give us no very high idea, either of the manners of the time or of the character of Arundel; and objections have been made to the authenticity of the narrative by Romish writers, on the ground that Thorpe represents the archbishop and his chaplains as saying any foolish things that suited his own argument. To this, however, it has been very properly answered, that Thorpe assures us in his preface that he went as near the words spoken on both sides as he could, seeing that he had some reason for suspecting that what he wrote might possibly come before the archbishop and his council at some other time.[1]

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[1] Milner's Church History, cent. xv. chap. 1.

The points upon which Thorpe was questioned were five. The first was, whether the material bread remained in the Eucharist after consecration; a question which from this time forwards was constantly made the grand test of heresy. Thorpe in reply declared that his own belief on the Eucharist was held for a thousand years in the Church as sufficient; but that then the loosing of Satan mentioned in the Apocalypse took place[2], and that since that time the friar Thomas Aquinas had brought in the distinction about an accident without a subject. The other points embraced by the examination were the lawfulness of worshipping images, the benefit of pilgrimages, the title of the clergy to tithes, and the lawfulness of swearing oaths. Upon all these Thorpe adhered to his master's principles, both right and wrong, and in particular maintained stoutly the very questionable position that it is the duty of every priest to make known the law of God to his people, how, when, where, and to whom he best may.[3]

The result of Thorpe's examination is not known, further than that he would not be persuaded to recant, and there is no evidence of his having suffered death; from which it has been conjectured by Fox that he ended his days in prison.[4]

The notion of the Lollards about the duty of preaching without a license is so subversive of all ecclesiastical discipline that we can hardly wonder that the bishops should do their utmost to suppress it. Moreover, they were clearly justified in opposing a firm front to the Lollard doctrine about Church property, more especially as this doctrine appeared to be gaining ground among the higher classes. The parliament itself had recently entertained a proposal for appropriating the Church revenues for the defence of the realm, though the project was defeated through the firmness of Arundel.[1]

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[1] Advertisement to the account of Thorpe in Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, vol. i. p. 259.

[2] It was held by Wycliffe and his followers, that the corruptions which overspread the Church in the second millennary after the Ascension were to be ascribed to the fulfilment of this prediction. Ibid. p. 300.

[3] Ibid. 285.

[4] Ibid. 350.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that imprisonment and burning were very bad arguments for enforcing conformity, as was shown at this period and has been found on numberless occasions since. Although the spirit of the age required the punishment of heresy as a crime, even Arundel seems to have doubted the success of his own weapons, and to have been sensible that it was useless to torture individuals unless he was able to close up the way of access to religious knowledge, and to keep the instruction of the people entirely under the control of the clergy. A commission, issued not long after Wycliffe's death, empowering the commissioners to seize and suppress any books of Wycliffe or his followers, had produced little effect; but Arundel, nevertheless, resolved to try what could be done to suppress Lollard writings.[2] With this view he promulgated, in the convocation at Oxford, in 1408, the constitutions to which reference has been already made, as forbidding the translation of the Scriptures by unauthorised persons, or the reading of Wycliffe's or any other translation.[3] One of these constitutions forbade any priest, secular or regular, to take the office of preacher without a previous examination by the diocesan and license from him, on pain of his incurring the greater excommunication *ipso facto* for the first offence and the legal penalties of heresy for the second; and those who aided and abetted him in such proceedings were made liable to the same punishment. Any church, churchyard, or other place, in which such unauthorised persons preached was laid under an interdict; and nothing was allowed to be taught, even by an authorised preacher, upon the sacraments or articles of faith, otherwise than had been determined by Holy Mother Church, on pain of excommunication *ipso facto* for the first offence, and on pain of his being declared a heretic convict for a second, and forfeiting his goods. No book or treatise composed by Wycliffe, or by any other person in his time, or since, or to be composed afterwards, might be read in the schools, halls, inns, or other places within the province of Canterbury, unless it were first approved by one of the universities, or by a committee of twelve men chosen from those bodies, and also by the archbishop of Canterbury for the time being. Even the assertion in the schools of any conclusions carrying a sound contrary to the Catholic faith was forbidden on pain of excommunication; and to preach contrary to the determinations of the Church, in its decrees and synodal constitutions (especially respecting the adoration of the cross, the veneration of images, or pilgrimages to the shrines and relics of the saints), or against taking oaths, subjected the preacher to the extreme penalties of heresy.

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[1] Collier, vol. iii. p. 266.
[2] Ibid., p. 198.; Lewis, p. 126.
[3] Johnson's Canons, pp. 457—473.

Another of these constitutions seems to require notice on account of the description which the archbishop gives of the university of Oxford. He calls her a "degenerate vine, bringing forth sour grapes, by eating whereof many of her sons, being too well conceited of their knowledge of the law of God, have set their teeth on edge," and complains that his province is infected with "new unprofitable doctrines, and blemished with the new damnable brand of Lollardy." This seems to indicate that Wycliffe's opinions had made a great progress in Oxford since his death, and some have supposed that the university, in 1406, publicly attested, by an instrument under their seal, their sense of the Reformer's great merits. Such an instrument has been produced, and although its authenticity is extremely questionable, the very attempt to forge such a document seems to testify the high estimation in which Wycliffe's memory was held at Oxford in the early part of the 15th century.[1] Under these circumstances we cannot be surprised at finding that this constitution of Arundel imposed upon the heads of colleges the duty of inquiring into the doctrines taught by their scholars, and visited offenders with appropriate punishments, and such heads of colleges were subjected to the penalty of deprivation in case of their being remiss in this duty, or teaching unsound doctrine themselves.

This constitution was followed, not long afterwards, by an attempt on the part of the archbishop to visit the university, and after some disputes he succeeded in obtaining the appointment of a committee of twelve members of their body to examine Wycliffe's books. These persons selected from them a long list of conclusions which they adjudged to be heretical, and transmitted to the primate, who not only confirmed their censure, but obtained from the Pope a condemnation of the same conclusions.[2]

The accession to the throne of the brave and chivalrous Henry V. brought no respite to the unfortunate Lollards, although there seems to be no sufficient cause for fixing upon that prince, with some writers, the odious imputation of being excessively zealous in the cause of persecution.[3] According to the cotemporary historian Walsingham, the Lollards assumed at this period a very menacing attitude towards the government, and were instigated to this by a person who occupies a conspicuous position in the history of the times.[4]

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[1] Lewis, p. 228.; Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, vol. i. p. 246.

[2] Collier, vol. iii. pp. 287—291.

[3] Milner's Church History, cent. xv. chap. 1. See contra Tyler's Memoirs of Henry V., vol. ii. pp. 319—347.

[4] Le Bas, p. 316

This was Sir John Oldcastle, commonly called Lord Cobham from his having married the heiress of the last person who bore that title.

In the convocation which met at the commencement of the new reign, a complaint was made against this individual as a great patron of heretical preachers, and as holding heretical opinions, and the synod resolved to take immediate proceedings against him. As, however, Cobham stood high in the royal favour, it was thought advisable previously to sound the king's mind towards the accused; and accordingly Arundel and several other prelates and nobles waited on Henry, and laid before him the charges which formed the ground of the intended prosecution. It happened that on that very day a number of Wycliffe's books and tracts had been burnt at St. Paul's Cross, from which one had been saved, and appeared, upon inquiry, to belong to Cobham. Certain passages from this tract were read to the king, who expressed great abhorrence of them, but requested the bishops to stay their proceedings until he had tried by reasoning to bring back the accused nobleman from the error of his ways. The prelates assented to the king's wishes, notwithstanding the opposition of some of the clergy, whereupon Henry sent for Cobham, and tried to persuade him to submit humbly to the authority of the Church. Cobham's reply was, that he was ready and willing to obey his prince, as God's appointed minister, but that to the Pope he owed neither suit nor service; and that so far was he from acknowledging him as his spiritual head, that he regarded him as the great Antichrist, the son of perdition. The king, shocked at these expressions, and finding after repeated attempts that he could do nothing by argument, finally gave the archbishop full authority to proceed by law. As, however, Cobham set the primate's power at defiance, and despised his summons and excommunication, it became necessary to have recourse to the royal aid for the purpose of securing the person of the accused, and compelling him to submit to the jurisdiction of the archbishop. Previously to this Cobham drew up a confession of faith, which he presented in person to the king. Henry, however, refused to interfere with the regular course of the proceedings according to law, and directed him to deliver the paper to the ecclesiastical judges. Cobham then (who, though a sincere and zealous Christian, was not altogether above the practices which the age in which he lived sanctioned) first offered to bring a hundred knights and esquires to purge him of the guilt of heresy, and this expedient failing, requested to be permitted to clear himself by the law of arms. This second proposal being rejected, he even tendered an appeal to the Pope; but the king told him that he should remain in custody until the Pope allowed his appeal, and that at all events the archbishop should be his judge, and concluded with committing him to the Tower, to await the day appointed for his appearance.[1] On that day Cobham was brought before his judges, the primate and the bishops of London and Winchester, and produced a written statement of his belief upon the four articles which formed the subject of accusation against him; viz. transubstantiation, penance, the use of images, and pilgrimages. As to the first he declared his belief, that the most worshipful sacrament of the altar was Christ's body in form of bread. Of the second he expressed his conviction that it was needful that every man should forsake sin, and do penance for sins already committed, with true confession, sincere contrition, and due satisfaction. Images he said were allowed of the Church, as calendars for laymen, to represent and bring to mind the passion of Christ and the martyrdom and good living of the saints; but whosoever gave to them the worship due to God, or put such hope or trust in their help as he should do in that of God, was guilty of the greatest idolatry. With respect to pilgrimages, he that would not know or keep the commandments of God, would be damned, though he went on pilgrimages to all the world; whereas he that knew God's commandments, and kept them to the end, would be saved, though he never in his life went on pilgrimages to Canterbury, Rome, or elsewhere.

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[1] Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, vol. i. pp. 356—366., compared with Tyler, vol. ii. 358—368.

To these answers Arundel objected as insufficient, on the ground that he had not stated whether the material bread remained after the words of consecration, or whether every Christian man was bound of necessity to confess his sins to a priest. Nothing further, however, could be extracted from him on that day, beyond a declaration that he was ready to believe what Christ's Holy Church had determined, or God had willed him to believe; but that he would not affirm that the Pope of Rome, with his cardinals and other prelates, had lawful power to determine such matter as stood not thoroughly with God's Word. The proceedings were then adjourned for two days, during which the archbishop sent to Cobham in the Tower a paper containing a statement of the determinations of the Church of Rome respecting the articles which had formed the subject of his examination, and also the supremacy of the Pope, all of which were expressed in the broadest terms.

On the day to which the proceedings were adjourned, the primate, with the bishops of London, Winchester, and Bangor, and a numerous assembly of doctors and others, met at the Priory of the Dominican Friars. Arundel opened the business of the day by offering to absolve Cobham from his excommunication upon his humbly desiring it in due form and manner. To which the prisoner replied, "Nay, forsooth, will I not; for I never yet trespassed against you, and therefore I will not do it." And with that (we are told by Fox) he kneeled down on the pavement, holding up his hands towards heaven, and said, "I shrive me here unto thee, my eternal living God, that in my frail youth I offended thee, O Lord, most grievously in pride, wrath, and gluttony, in covetousness, and in lechery. Many men have I hurt in mine anger, and done many other horrible sins; good Lord, I ask thee mercy." And therewith, weepingly, he stood up again, and said, with a mighty voice, "Lo, good people, lo; for the breaking of God's law and His great commandments they never yet cursed me: but for their own laws and traditions most cruelly do they handle both me and other men. And, therefore, both they and their laws, by the promise of God, shall utterly be destroyed."[1]

Then ensued a long argument between the prisoner and his judges, the particulars of which cannot be given here. It is sufficient to state that he maintained his ground firmly with respect to all the points alleged against him, upon the authority of the Scriptures, with which he showed by his answers that he was more familiar than his judges. Reference being made to Wycliffe, he declared, "As for that virtuous man Wycliffe, whose judgments ye so highly disdain, I shall say here of my part, both before God and man, that before I knew that despised doctrine of his, I never abstained from sin. But since I learned therein to fear my Lord God, it hath otherwise, I trust, been with me; so much grace could I never find in all your glorious instructions." This declaration elicited from Dr. Walden, prior of the Carmelites, the following quaint reply, which may serve as a specimen of the style of reasoning of the inquisitors:—"It were not well with me (so many virtuous men living, and so many learned men teaching, the Scripture being also open, and the examples of fathers so plenteous) if I then had no grace to amend my life, till I heard the devil preach. St. Hierome saith, that he that seeketh such suspected masters shall not find the midday light, but the midday devil."[2]

At length the examination was brought to a close by

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[1] Wordsworth's Eccles. Biog., vol. i. p. 373.

[2] Ibid. pp. 378, 379.

Arundel making a final appeal to him to remember himself, and have none other opinion in these matters than the universal belief of the Holy Church of Rome. To this the prisoner replied, "I will none otherwise believe in these points than that I have told you before." The definitive sentence then followed, by which Cobham was declared to be a detestable heretic, and left thenceforth as such to the secular power. Upon this he said, cheerfully, "Though ye judge my body, which is but a wretched thing; yet am I certain and sure that ye can do no harm to my soul, no more than could Satan upon the soul of Job. He that created that will of his infinite mercy and promise save it; I have therein no manner of doubt." He then declared his determination to stand by the profession of his belief unto the death; and, after adding a brief exhortation to the bystanders to beware of their blind teachers, he concluded with solemnly praying for his enemies and persecutors, and so was led back to the Tower.[1]

So far Lord Cobham appears before us in the light of a brave confessor of Gospel truth, suffering unjust persecution, but from this time his history becomes involved in a degree of obscurity, which perhaps cannot now be cleared up. From the facts that are ascertained it seems very probable that he became the leader of a formidable insurrection, the object of which was to bring about a revolution of the government in Church and State. Thus much we know, that the sentence passed on him on the 25th of September, 1413, was not executed, and that before the 10th of October he had escaped from the Tower. It is said that a respite of fifty days was obtained by Arundel, and that in the interval between his condemnation and escape, a forged recantation of his opinions was published in his name, the authenticity of which, however, he found means to deny from his prison.[2] On the

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[1] Wordsworth's Eccles. Biog., vol. i. pp. 387—391. [2] Ibid. Milner.

10th of the following January the king received information that Lord Cobham and 20,000 Lollards were to meet together in St. Giles's Fields, London, for the purpose of seizing his person and taking possession of the government. Henry upon this assembled what forces he could muster at a very short notice, shut the gates of the city to prevent reinforcements from being conveyed to the insurgents, and proceeded to the place of rendezvous. There he found several persons collected, whom he attacked, killing some and taking others prisoners. Of the latter, thirty-nine persons, including one Beverley, a preacher, and Sir Roger Acton, were afterwards convicted of heresy and treason, and suffered death.[1] On the same 10th of January a proclamation issued, offering a reward of 1000 marks to any person who should take Cobham, besides other rewards to those who should assist in that deed; and also imputing to Cobham the treasonable design of stirring up others to compass the king's death, on account of the part which he had taken against the Lollards for heresy. In the March following another proclamation offered a free pardon to all who would apply for it before St. John the Baptist's day, with the exception of Lord Cobham and several others who are named. These and other documents show that whether Cobham was guilty of the alleged conspiracy or not, at all events Henry believed him to be a traitor, and from that time regarded the Lollards, not merely as heretics, whom he would willingly have restored to the Church, but as determined enemies of his crown and government. Notwithstanding all the efforts made to take him, Cobham escaped to Wales, and was not captured till four years after his escape, when he was brought before parliament, during the king's absence in France, and forthwith condemned to be hanged as a traitor, and burned as a heretic. This sentence was executed in St. Giles's Fields, the scene of his imputed act of treason, and he displayed in his death the same courage and Christian bearing with which he had confronted his judges at his examination.[1]

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[1] Wordsworth, vol. i. p. 398.

The terror which the Lollards inspired among the upper classes of society after the affair of St. Giles's Fields, and for which, undoubtedly, there were good reasons, led to the passing of another act of parliament against them in the second year of Henry V. The preamble to this shows the state of public feeling, by declaring that "great rumours, congregations, and insurrections had been raised in the realm of England by divers liege subjects of the king, as well by those who belong to the heretical sect called Lollardie, as by others of their confederacy, excitation, and abetment, with a view to annul and subvert the Christian faith and the law of God in this kingdom; also to destroy our sovereign lord the king himself, and all manner of estates of this realm, as well spiritual as temporal; and, moreover, all manner of policy, and, finally, all the laws of the land." Having made this alarming announcement, the statute went on to compel all persons holding civil offices, from the chancellor downwards, to take an oath for the suppression of Lollardy, and subjected those who were convicted of heresy to the forfeiture of all their real and personal property.[2]

The provocation given by the Lollards was, indeed, undeniable, and sufficient, perhaps, to require the passing of additional laws for the protection of property and the repression of sedition. Nothing could, however, justify the course of persecution which the rulers of Church and State henceforth followed with blind and indiscriminate fury. After we have made all reasonable allowances for the ignorance which taught men to look upon persecution as a duty, we cannot but regard it as a gloomy period of our history, which, during the space of more than a century, witnessed the burning of so

[1] Tyler, vol. ii. pp. 373—392. Wordsworth, ibid.

[2] Le Bas, pp. 316, 317. ; Collier, vol. iii. pp 309, 310.

many innocent persons, whose only crime was either the reading of the Holy Scriptures in their native tongue, or, what was the most common case, the denial of that incomprehensible dogma of Romish metaphysics, transubstantiation.

When the prevailing spirit of the times was such as to consider deviations from the authorised standard of religious faith as crimes against the state, a change in the occupant of the archiepiscopal see made little difference. Arundel dying soon after the affair of St. Giles's Fields, was succeeded by Chicheley, bishop of St. David's, whose fair reputation, as a munificent patron of learning, has been tarnished by some most shameful acts of persecution towards the Lollards. John Claydon, a currier of the city of London, who had been twice imprisoned for heresy, and had recanted, being unable to read himself, was accused by a person who had been his own servant, of holding an assembly on the Lord's Day and other festivals, at which two friends and a transcriber were present. The transcriber wrote out passages from a religious book, called the "Lantern of Light," which another servant read aloud to the company. This book, on examination, was found to contain the ten commandments in English, and some declarations with respect to the Pope being Antichrist, and other things which the Romish Church considered as heretical; but there was no evidence to show that these passages had been read to Claydon. Nevertheless, for merely listening to those parts which had been read in his own house, and in the presence of none but his own friends and servants, this unfortunate tradesman was handed over to the secular power and burnt.[1] The inquisitorial spirit, which this prosecution of Claydon tended to encourage, by setting a man's own household to be witnesses against him, was still more openly manifested by a constitution of Chicheley, issued in 1416. The bishops were directed to make inquiry in every rural deanery twice at least in every year, after persons suspected of heresy, and to cause three or more men of good report, in every deanery and parish in which heretics were said to dwell, to be sworn to give information against any who kept private conventicles, or differed in their life and manners from the generality of the faithful, or who maintained heresies or errors, or had suspected books written in the vulgar English tongue.[1] The same spirit showed itself in the prosecution of a clergyman, of the name of Taylor, who, after several proceedings against him before Chicheley for heresy, was at last consigned to the flames, for maintaining the following propositions, which were regarded as heretical. In a private letter, written to a brother clergyman, he argued that prayer ought to be made to God only; that prayer should be addressed to Christ, with respect to His divinity, and not to His human nature; and that prayer to a creature was idolatry.[2]

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[1] Tyler, vol. ii. p. 394.

It is a relief amidst the sickening details of cruelty with which the ecclesiastical records of this century are filled to find instances of eminent English churchmen of this period, who considered that the ministers of Christ had other and better work appointed for them than that of burning and torturing those who were called heretics.

In 1414 a general council was held at Constance, in Switzerland, with the double object of putting an end to the papal schism, and bringing about a reformation of the Church. Among the representatives of the English nation at this assembly was Robert Hallam, bishop of Salisbury, a most determined opponent of papal abuses, who laboured earnestly and faithfully, until his death, to promote the work of reform. Hallam boldly maintained, what was a new idea to the ecclesiastics of that age, though afterwards asserted by the decrees of this very council, that a general council is superior to the

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[1] Johnson, vol. ii. p. 482.

[2] Tyler, vol. ii. p. 409.

Pope. He was encouraged to pursue this course by another eminent English divine, Dr. Ullerston of Oxford, who, when Hallam went to the council of Pisa in 1409, wrote a treatise containing suggestions for the removal of all the principal evils which deformed the Church.[1] Ullerston was no enemy to the Papacy as a purely spiritual power, and he continued through life in uninterrupted communion with the Church of Rome. His desire was, as he expressed it, that "when all abuses were cut away, the Pope should employ himself agreeably to the duties of his charge, in procuring peace for Christians, not only by praying, but by preaching the Gospel himself, and sending everywhere good preachers, who by their doctrine and example might urge on princes and people throughout the world their several duties, and who might make a holy war upon the passions of mankind, rooting up those sensual desires which, according to St. James, are the sources of wars and divisions in the Church and in the state."[2]

Hallam died at Constance in 1417, and soon afterwards the election of Martin V. to the papal chair took place, a proceeding which, while it put an end to the schism, so revived the papal power in its most offensive shape, as to render all hopes of reform of abuses from within the Church itself altogether vain. Nevertheless, the English hierarchy of the 15th century were not all blind supporters of papal corruptions, neither were they all persecutors of heretics. History has recorded a remarkable exception to the general description of the persecuting prelates of this age, in the person of one who, refusing to adopt measures of violence towards the Lollards, fell himself a victim to the prevailing bigotry. Reginald Pecock, bishop of St. Asaph, and afterwards of Chichester, was a most zealous defender of the Church against the attacks of Wycliffe and his followers, although, in dealing with dissenters, he preferred the methods of argument and persuasion to those of imprisonment and burning, and declared emphatically, "that the clergy would be condemned at the last day, if by clear wit they drew not men into consent of true faith, otherwise than by fire, or sword, or hanging."[1]

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[1] The Council of Pisa was called for the purpose of putting an end to the schism, but failed in its object. Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 14.

[2] Tyler, vol. ii. p. 48.

In 1447, three years after his promotion to a bishopric, he undertook, in a sermon delivered at St. Paul's Cross, to defend the bishops against some of the popular charges brought against them, with respect to non-residence within their dioceses, and the omission of the duty of preaching. He even maintained that they might receive their sees by papal provisions, and pay annates to the Pope, without incurring the charge of simony. In defending these last-named abuses he was obliged to take up the absurd and untenable position, that the Pope, as universal pastor, had a right to the fruits of all ecclesiastical benefices, and might in the disposal of them reserve to himself whatever portion of the profits he thought fit to claim as his own.[2] This kind of argument proves that Pecock was still ready to advocate some of the worst abuses of the Papacy; and in a book called the Repressor, published in English two years later, the object of which was to repress the popular disposition to blame the clergy, he showed the extent to which he was disposed to go in supporting the existing doctrines and practices of the Church. He commences with combating a dogma which in later times was so ably refuted by the excellent Hooker, and displays a power of argument which has led to a comparison of bishop Pecock with that admirable writer. This was the notion of the Lollards of that day, who, going beyond Wycliffe, held that Holy Scripture contained, not only the law of God concerning revealed and supernatural truth, but also the only rule for everything that was to be done in the Church or in the life of man, without any regard to the moral law or judgment of natural reason.[1] Having exposed this error, Pecock goes on to defend the use of images, pilgrimages, the possessions and divers orders of the clergy, the primacy of St. Peter, and the institution of religious orders. Without going through his arguments on these several points, we may observe, that it has been remarked that, in justifying pilgrimages, he says not a word in defence of indulgences to be obtained by resorting to the relics and images of saints. From this we may infer, that Pecock did not consider that the practice of the Popes in granting indulgences, then so much in vogue, could be defended. Moreover, he concludes that "the reading and hearing God's Word, which is an exercise in audible signs given us from God, in clearness of teaching, in delight, and in comfort, as much surpasseth the instruction by visible signs devised by man (such as images and the like) as the light of the sun surpasseth that of the moon, or a great torch a little candle."[2]

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[1] Lewis's Life of Pecock, p. 207.

[2] Ibid. p. 42.

So far Pecock was only a mild and liberal defender of the established system; and his services were acknowledged by a papal bull of provision for his translation to the see of Chichester, in 1450. After his translation he renewed his attempts to reconcile the Lollards to the Church, by publishing another book in English, called a "Treatise of Faith," which was directly opposed to the High Church theology of the day, and was the cause of Pecock himself being made an object of attack to the persecutors. One of the leading dogmas of that theology invested the determinations of the Church or clergy with the attribute of infallibility; while the constitutions of archbishop Arundel put the denial of these determinations upon the same footing with respect to punishment for heresy as the denial of any fundamental article of the Christian faith.[3] Against the notion of infallibility Pecock boldly urged, in his "Treatise of Faith," that the principle that the clergy might not err in matters of belief was open to serious objection, and that all attempts to regain the Lollards by asserting that principle were hopeless. He maintained further, that holy writ, exclusive of unwritten traditions, is such a ground and foundation of our Christian general faith, that there is no greater, or better, or surer; and that it is the only rule or standard of revealed and supernatural truth.[1]

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[1] Lewis, pp. 44—55.

[2] Ibid. pp. 70—79.

[3] Johnson, vol. ii. p. 463. 469.

This boldness in questioning the Church's infallibility soon drew upon him a host of clerical opponents, who attacked the bishop in their sermons and writings; but his most bitter enemies appear to have been the lay peers, who expelled him from the House of Lords in 1457.[2] This proceeding was followed by a citation before the archbishop's court to answer a charge of heresy. His books were submitted by Bourchier, the primate, in compliance with a constitution of Arundel[3], to a committee of doctors, who pronounced them to be heretical; and thereupon Pecock had the alternative proposed to him of abjuration or the stake. And here, unquestionably (as might be the case with many men of sincere piety, but deficient in moral firmness), he showed a lamentable instance of human frailty, by consenting to abjure his opinions. He was compelled to perform this act of humiliation publicly, at St. Paul's Cross, habited in his episcopal dress, in the presence of thousands of spectators, before whom he delivered up several of his books with his own hands to be cast into the flames.[4]

While we lament that such a man should have been so far overcome by the terrors of death as to decline to seal by martyrdom his testimony to the truths declared in his writings, let us not forget that there is one circumstance to be alleged in extenuation of his offence, which should prevent us from judging him too severely. Pecock had never forsaken the communion of the Romish Church; and therefore may, however erroneously, have thought himself bound in conscience to obey its authority, even though unjustly exercised. While he questioned the Church's infallibility, he might feel a sincere dread of rebelliously opposing his own private judgment to the determination of his metropolitan and brethren.[1]

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[1] Lewis, pp. 138—140. 198—204.

[2] Ibid. pp. 143—145.

[3] Johnson, vol. ii. p. 465.

[4] Lewis, pp. 147—168.

The condemnation for heresy entailed upon Pecock a forfeiture of his bishopric; but such was his interest at Rome, that he procured a bull for its restitution. This led to an application to the crown to enforce the statute of premunire against him; and in the end he was deprived of his episcopal see, and imprisoned with great rigour for the remainder of his life in Thorney Abbey.[2]

The charges brought against him, so far as they were really grounded on his writings, involved nothing that, even in the judgment of eminent divines of the Church of Rome, could be fairly called heretical. And yet so determined were the hierarchy to brand Pecock with the name of heretic, that immediately after his condemnation an inquisitorial search was made, by the archbishop's authority, for his books, some of which were publicly burnt at Oxford. Moreover, though the foundation of King's College, Cambridge, had taken place some years before his conviction, a clause was subsequently inserted in the statutes of that Society, by which the scholars were obliged to swear not to favour the condemned opinions of John Wycliffe, Reginald Pecock, or any other heretic.[3]

These severe measures towards one so learned, wise, and charitable, not only reflect the utmost disgrace upon his persecutors, but perhaps show more than anything else that it was as yet utterly impossible to reform the Church by mild and moderate counsels, or to stop the progress of persecution. If Pecock, who had spent his life in defending the doctrines and practices of the Church, was condemned as a heretic, immured for life in a dungeon, and consigned to infamy, what redress of abuses, what degree of mercy, was to be expected from Church rulers so blind and infatuated?

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[1] Le Bas, p. 324.

[2] Lewis, pp. 174—178.

[3] Ibid. pp. 170—173.

Under these circumstances, we can hardly wonder that the flames of persecution continued to rage in England throughout the 15th century, with the exception of the period of the civil war between the Houses of York and Lancaster, when men's minds were diverted to other objects. The accession of Henry VII., which brought peace between rival factions, brought no peace to the victims of religious intolerance. That monarch is said to have himself assumed the character of a controversialist, in order to convince a Lollard divine of his errors; and then, when he had persuaded the unhappy recusant to recant, to have requited his submission by ordering him to be burnt. Some of the cases of martyrdom of this reign are more revolting in their circumstances of cruelty than those of the reigns of Henry IV. and Henry V.; and the severities of Arundel and Chicheley were almost surpassed by the inhuman deeds of bishop Nix of Norwich.[1]

Nor were those who, yielding to the frailty of the flesh, recanted in the hour of extreme terror, in a much more enviable situation than the martyrs. They were compelled to carry about with them through their lives a sign of their former profession, by being branded on the cheek with a red-hot iron, or wearing the likeness of a faggot painted on the sleeve. This mark was a notice to all the world to avoid all intercourse with those who bore it; a fatal sign, the exhibition of which brought upon them almost a certainty of starvation, while to lay it aside was death.[2]

Nevertheless, all that persecution could do was still unable to extinguish the Lollards altogether; there survived a comparatively faithful few through all these horrors. Wycliffe's Bible was continually read, notwithstanding the terrors of the dungeon and the stake, till at length a change took place, which affected not merely the humble artizan and peasant, but the sovereign, the nobles, and the hierarchy itself. The result was the rejection of the papal supremacy as an intolerable tyranny, and the re-establishment of the English Church upon a scriptural foundation, with reformed confessions of faith, and a ritual purified from the vanities and fictions of medieval superstition.

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[1] Le Bas, pp. 327, 328.

[2] Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, vol. i. p. 423.; Le Bas, p. 329.

Independently of the history of the Lollard persecution, the ecclesiastical records of England afford few subjects of interest during the 15th century. The preceding pages show many instances of the evasion of the statutes against papal provisions, which, though useful as testimonies against the encroachments of the Popes, can hardly, perhaps, be said to have had any very extensive practical effect.

This appeared more fully after the termination of the schism, when Pope Martin V. ventured, by provision, to dispose of thirteen bishoprics in two years within the province of Canterbury, and made his nephew, a youth of fourteen, archdeacon of Canterbury.[1] On the other hand, this pontiff received a decided check, when he tried to appoint an archbishop of York by the same means, and still more when he attempted to induce the king and parliament to repeal what he presumed to call "the execrable statute" of premunire. All the efforts of archbishop Chicheley availed nothing to induce the House of Commons to consent to its abrogation. So strong was the jealousy felt in high places with respect to papal interference in such matters, that even the cardinal bishop of Winchester, a member of the royal family, having been appointed legate *à latere* to England, was obliged to make a solemn promise to the peers that he would do nothing, by virtue of his legatine commission, to the prejudice of the rights of the crown or the liberties of the subject.[1]

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[1] Collier, vol. iii. p. 327.

Perhaps one of the most remarkable facts in the history of this century is, that, in a period of the greatest corruption of religion, so many munificent foundations for the promotion of learning were established in the two universities and elsewhere. Of the prelates, William of Wykeham, Fleming, Chicheley, Cardinal Beaufort, Wainfleet, and Rotheram, (some of whom were deeply, and for their own reputation most unhappily, engaged in the persecutions of the times,) earned for themselves a lasting claim upon the gratitude of posterity, by the erection of the noblest of our colleges. Their example was followed by the highest personages of the state, as Humphrey duke of Gloucester, king Henry VI. and his consort, and the consort of Edward IV., and the pious and munificent Margaret countess of Richmond, mother of Henry VII. Archbishop Bourchier contributed still more effectually to the promotion of learning by assisting, in 1468, to introduce the newly discovered art of printing into Oxford.[2]

The foundations here mentioned doubtless owed their origin in a great measure to the prevailing superstition which taught that heaven was to be won by such pious works; and they afford a remarkable proof of the possibility of the existence in the same minds of the love of learning and the wish to promote intellectual cultivation, together with the deepest spiritual darkness. On the other hand, it would ill become us to omit to regard the commencement of these collegiate institutions in an age of religious corruption as a proof of God's providential care over His Church in tempering evil with good. Nor can we be sufficiently thankful that He permitted some of the persecutors of the faithful professors, who suffered all manner of evil because they searched the Scriptures as the only means of attaining the way of salvation, to establish such institutions. It was an ample compensation to mankind for the sins of their founders, that these schools of learning should in after-ages be nursing mothers to the champions of the Scriptural truths, which those founders persecuted to the death.

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[1] Collier, vol. iii. pp. 329. 340—349. It is a remarkable fact, that at the council of Constance, a concordat was made between Pope Martin and the English nation, which put a restraint upon some of the minor papal claims, but left the abuse of provisions untouched. The reason given by Mr. Hallam is perhaps the true one, that our ancestors, "disdained to accept by compromise with the Pope any modification, or even confirmation, of their statute law." Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 357.

[2] Collier, vol. iii. pp. 403, 404.

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